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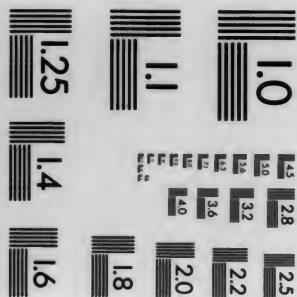
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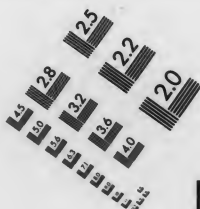
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REALM OF THE RETAILER

MET L. SALEY

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School of Business



Met L. Saley

REALM OF THE RETAILER

THE RETAIL LUMBER TRADE, ITS DIFFICULTIES AND
SUCCESSSES; ITS HUMOR AND PHILOSOPHY,
ITS THEORY AND PRACTICE,
WITH PRACTICAL YARD
IDEAS.

By MET L. SALEY

DEDICATED TO THE RETAIL LUMBER DEALERS
OF THE UNITED STATES

Compiled from "The Realm of the Retailer" as Published in
The American Lumberman

CHICAGO
THE AMERICAN LUMBERMAN
1902

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Business

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A.P. Feb. 28/18

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
The New Year	11
Qualifications of a Good Lumberman	12
Different Types of Competitors	14
The Art of Looking at Things.....	17
Excuses for Scrapping	21
An Advertising Suggestion	22
Knowing What Lumber is Wanted for	25
Shed Defects	27
Mixing Implements and Lumber	35
Characteristics of Trade	38
Value of Appearance	43
Prompt Payment and Otherwise	45
Bills Should Go With Lumber	47
Comfortable Offices	52
An Easy Way to Hang Doors	54
An Eye on the Prices of Others	55
Politics in Trade	58
Where to Get Trade	62
Things Which Exasperate Must Be Expected	67
A Labor Saver	70
Selling for Cash	73
Handling Hardware	77
Steady Prices Wanted	81
How Your Customers Grade	83
Defects in a Coal House	87
Approaching Dullness	88
Lending Lumber	92
Open and Closed Sheds	94
Hypnotic Power	96
Handling Town and Country Trade	99
Keeping the Poacher Out	102
Selling Lumber from Sample	105
The School That Would Please the Yard Man.....	107
Grades in Yard Men	108
The Rage for Big Towns.....	110
Methods of Buying Yards	112
The Arbitration Idea	114
Division of Shed Bins	117
Pleasing the Farmer Customer	118
Many New Yards	121
The Wholesale Dealers' Complaint.....	124
Tricks of Wholesale Men	126
Forgetfulness in Charging	128
Perfect Balances	130
Cogs Which Do Not Mesh	133
Different Qualifications of Partners	136

CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
Farmer Yards	138
Standing in with Contractors.....	140
A Handy Door Rack.....	142
The Glorious Fourth.....	144
From Country to City.....	145
How the Poor Swede Bit.....	148
More or Fewer Yards.....	149
The Prudent Schemer	152
Where Carelessness May Succeed.....	156
The Contractor as a Factor.....	157
Disadvantages of Small Stock Rooms.....	159
A Pessimistic Lumber Seller.....	162
Points on Collecting.....	166
The Art of Buying Right.....	168
Increasing Profits by Glazing.....	170
Kodak as a Trade Winner.....	171
Side Lines	174
A Device for Hanging Doors.....	177
Ruinous Wrangling	179
The Kind of a Letter to Write.....	181
Concerning Minor Things.....	182
To Protect the Edges of Loads.....	185
Keeping Tab on Yard Hands.....	186
In Fear of the Line Yard Men.....	187
Mood as a Motive.....	190
Opposed to Retail Association.....	192
An Improved Bolster.....	195
Read and You Will Know.....	196
An Effective Door Fastener.....	200
Material That Is Returned.....	201
Staving Off Collections.....	203
Change in Yard Managers.....	205
Cheap Shed Gutter.....	206
Patent Lath.....	207
Cost of Selling Lumber.....	209
To Help from Car to Shed.....	211
Off to the Ball Game.....	212
Eaves Troughs on Shed Hoods.....	215
A Bill in Detail Wanted.....	216
Lumber's Flight	218
A Novel Lime House.....	220
Our Little Differences.....	221
A Case of Screens.....	225
Should He Sell Hemlock?.....	228
A Shingle Display.....	231
Knowing One's Business.....	232
The Man In the Yard.....	234
A Pile Binder.....	237
Inadequate Office and Yard Help.....	238
Getting Out Mill Work.....	242
Maple and Birch Flooring.....	246
Unevenness of Trade.....	247
Wagon Stakes.....	250
The Two Kinds.....	252
Reasons for Thanks.....	255

CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
Picking Over Stock.....	259
Locating on Track.....	261
The Virtue of Relaxation.....	263
Price Lists.....	265
How to Pile Drain Pipe.....	269
A Swell Pronunciation.....	271
Selling Out-of-Date Stock.....	271
Duplicate Receipts.....	273
Cramped Quarters.....	276
Preserving the Fresh Look.....	277
The Square Man.....	279
Fallacy of Saying "No".....	281
The Man Who Knows It All.....	283
Blind Yards	287
Objections to Small Stocks.....	290
Legal Kinks.....	291
Light Rigs For Light Work.....	293
Handy For the Delivery Man.....	295
The Set Jaw.....	296
Woes of the Coal Man.....	298
Converted to Reasonable Prices.....	301
Oak for Bridges.....	304
Getting a Customer's Standing.....	306
Out of His Place.....	309
Gates and Doors.....	313
Taking Winter Easy.....	316
Senseless Objection to Doors.....	318
Canceling and Registering Orders.....	320
Salt in Shed Alleys.....	324
On the Alert for Trouble.....	326
A Trade Puller.....	329
Storm Doors	330
Location and Competition.....	332
Slow Paying Farmers.....	335
The Right Kind of Stationery.....	338
An Over-Active Retailer.....	339
The Scarcity of Lath.....	343
Encouraging to Beginners.....	345
Handy Little Book.....	347
A Contractor's Dilemma.....	350
Keeping Comfortable	354
Prairie Fences.....	356
Low Prices Their Salvation.....	359
A Lumber Jack.....	363
The Winning Twain.....	364
The Religion of Difference.....	366
A Labor Saving Device.....	367
Yard Man's Opinion of Bull Methods.....	369
Lumber Sheds	373
Index	381

PUBLISHER'S ANNOUNCEMENT.

One of the most valued departments in the AMERICAN LUMBERMAN has been the "Realm of the Retailer," contributed by Met L. Saley. It has been a department to which many readers of the paper, not only in the retail lumber business but in other branches of the lumber trade, have first turned. It abounded in dry humor and quaint philosophy, but, more than that, was a compendium of practical information in regard to the technique of the retail lumber business. It gave wide circulation to the multitudes of valuable ideas, methods and devices which, but for that department, would have remained the sole property of those who invented or adopted them.

It seemed worth while, therefore, to select from that which has appeared in this department during the last three years enough to make this book. No attempt has been made at arrangement according to subjects, though an index at the back will be a clew to some of the more important ones. The book embodies the results of years of study of the retail trade and of much of the best thought and experience of successful retailers. It is both theoretical and practical.

The first use of the department title "Realm of the Retailer" was in one of the predecessors of the AMERICAN LUMBERMAN, on November 10, 1894, and placed by the editor over matter prepared by Mr. J. Newton Nind, since which time it has continuously appeared, of late years over the signature of Mr. Met L. Saley. In putting into this more permanent form much of the best of this department it is hoped that a real service has been done to the retail trade of the United States and that it will be doubly welcome, not only as a storehouse of useful and practical ideas but for the homely philosophy and witty aphorisms with which it is enlivened.

THE AMERICAN LUMBERMAN.

PREFACE.

The "foreword" of an author is of less importance than the afterword of the reader; still, it has become a habit to think that the reading public would not know that a book was to be thrown at its head unless this "foreword" were spoken. It serves as a front door bell to announce that a book is waiting to come in. If you think the personality of the author is prominent I am glad you think so. That was the aim. It is as near my book as it could be made. It is a record of what I have seen, thought and heard. Notwithstanding the quoted opinions cross and recross, being born of the observations of representative men, made from different stand-points, they are of rare value. It will also be observed that my own opinions and ideas do not always run along parallel lines. This is what happens when a man tries to astonish the world with big thoughts. One big thought will challenge another and a pitched battle follows. If in this book there is not so much fighting by these thoughts that the commotion will disturb at night the household in which it may be admitted, I shall be glad to know it. The only way for a man to be thoroughly consistent in the opinions of all others is to say nothing.

Too much cannot be said in praise of the illustrations. It is necessary for an artist to be versatile and study a subject from every side, else he is not a great artist. The artists whose efforts illumine these articles must have looked at me from every angle, and found every angle. On the authority of these artists I am a sort of chameleon-like human being who changes his appearance every new moon. I never knew myself so well as I did after seeing these pictures. I feel grateful to the makers of them.

These phases of the subject, however, amount to little. Above all, it is my earnest desire that the result of what has been written may be to ease the way of some man who is selling lumber.

Met. A. Bailey x

Realm of the Retailer.

THE NEW YEAR.

I hope you are satisfied with your year's work. In the lumber line it has been one of the most phenomenal that even the oldest of us has ever experienced, and if you have shuffled your cards skillfully you have made some money. The conditions have been unexpected. No doubt the proper thing for a man to do is to be prepared for the exceptional. The usual will generally take care of itself.

Having made money or not, if we are still in the land of the living we ought not to be growling. I saw a funeral procession going to the cemetery the other day, and I would not have changed places with the body in the box for all the money there is in the land.

I hope that during the year we have all paid and received our just dues, treated everybody as we would like to be treated, and that we have grown a little intellectually and spiritually. When a yard man takes an inventory at the end of the year he should not forget to include himself in his assets. He ought to size himself up and ascertain if there is more of him this year than there was last. If not he is not getting on swimmingly, no matter if he has sold all the lumber of the town. Your lumber yard is nothing as compared with you. You can pace off your yard and arrive at its exact size. You can count up your pieces of boards and timber, your bunches of shingles and bundles of lath, and know precisely what they all amount to, but there is no way by which you can arrive at your own worth and capabilities. You are past all comprehension. It seems to

me that if we knew more about ourselves, fully understood that we are a spark of the Divine, we would try to make more of our opportunities.



"Will drink a cocktail."

striving to improve a little on the year that is so fast disappearing. At 12 o'clock on New Year's day I will drink a cocktail to the long life, health and happiness of every one of you.

QUALIFICATIONS OF A GOOD LUMBERMAN.

I had been caught in the lumberman's office during the shower, and following the downpour the yard man might as well talk, for it was not observable that he had anything else to do. No customer was in sight, the entire community being at home resuscitating their drowned chickens, so I tipped my chair against the wall, the yard man gracefully

I have seen a large number of yard men in the past twelve months, have eaten at the tables of some of them, slept under their roofs, ridden after their horses, and right here I want to thank them one and all. These men have striven to make my journeys among them as pleasant as possible. And now let us go into the new year—that year that will look so funny written 1902—in peace with ourselves and the world. Let us gird up our loins, as Artemus Ward was wont to say, and march on,

piled his feet on the table, and we touched on more subjects than you could shake a lath at. Of course, the weather came in for a share of our attention, one telling the other what he knew perfectly well before, namely, that it had been a very wet season, the other in turn remarking that it didn't look as though the rain was over yet. Such conversation as that emanates from a 22-caliber man, I suppose; nevertheless, in this world of frivolities it appears to be necessary. I once fell in with a fellow who evidently had decided in the interest of a high order of intelligence that when he opened his mouth he would say something. I never heard him remark it was a hot day, a cold day or anything similar. And right between us I would rather visit with a bump on a log any day than with him. He was so wise and exact and towered so mightily above the herd that it set my teeth on edge to listen to him. I knew all the time that he was an affected donkey, but he thought he was passing for a very superior individual.

If you set this yard dealer down for a 22-caliber man, however, you would get left in the estimate. He could indulge in small talk, but when the proper time came he could let fly big bullets.

"I do not wonder," he remarked, "that there are not more good all around lumbermen. There are unusual duties which demand our attention. Do you use a typewriter? Yes? Well, then, you know there are some combinations of characters which invariably bother you a little because you do not use them frequently. To run them in on a jump is out of the question—that is, unless you are an expert, and I take it you are not, for we are not experts except in about one line." I tipped my hat to him and he continued. "As it is with your writing machine so it is with the retail lumberman. Take the lien law, for instance. The average dealer does not have anything to do with the lien law once in twelve months, and when he does is it a bit surprising that he can't go at it slap bang? He isn't used to it. It is so in a dozen things I could name."

"What qualifications do you regard as prime ones in a retail lumberman?" I asked.

"Well, by jingo, I don't know," he answered, thoughtfully. "It's a great thing to be a good buyer—to know when to buy, how to buy, where to buy. There are lumbermen who know little more about buying than my boy there. They never catch the spirit of the market except as it is told them by some wily salesman. Then it is a great thing to be a good collector, and perhaps equally as important to be a good salesman, for a good salesman can make easy collecting. Come to think of it, I don't know as there is any one prime qualification. To pay more than lumber can be bought for is not the thing to do, but it is as sensible as it is to sell to irresponsible people and have the book account everlastingly standing. The man who does one I think has no reason to brag over the other."

By this time the water was so far gone from the streets that I could pick my way to the hotel without wetting my feet in my patent leather pumps, and having reached the place I labored for half an hour with a steak that I know was cut from some old cow that was born before I was.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMPETITORS.

The majority of business men are constantly in fear there may come in some competition that will knock them out. It is for this reason that we have so many combinations and trusts against which politicians and newspapers howl, but in which all of them would like an interest if they could have it. It is perfectly natural for us to score those men who are more successful in business than we are. Every under dog howls with discomfiture, and every one of them would be on top if he could.

There are today 50,000 retail lumbermen in the country who will go to bed tonight fearful there may be new yards located in their towns tomorrow. Then the competition

they already have is rarely of a nature to suit them. There are yard men doing business alongside of individual yards who wish that those yards would pass into the hands of line men, and there are others who have line yard competitors and wish they would sell out to individuals. You couldn't in a hundred years find the man who is entirely satisfied with the trade conditions surrounding him and it is a glorious thing it is so, for with satisfaction there would be no effort and consequently no advancement. It is this desire to better ourselves that puts the spikes in our shoes which enable us to keep our footing on life's slippery paths without falling.

Undoubtedly the best thing for us to do is to make the best of the competition we have and not worry our heads off over it. We don't like it of course—we don't like to have the poacher watching every corner to get in his wedge. If we are poor we are not in love with the rich dealer who if he takes a notion can sell lumber at cost or below with the effect, as we think, of cutting our throats and not materially injuring him. If we are rich we stand in fear of the poor dealer who has nothing to lose but who can keep us in hot water. And above all have we reason to dislike the competitor who will not affiliate; who will not even use good horse sense, who wants the whole earth and goes on bull-headed to the end, permitting no one else to make money and making none himself. That is the kind of competitor that the sooner he gets out the sooner the trade of the town will assume normal proportions.

A pioneer yard man told me he had settled down to the conclusion to make the best of the competition that he had, as he had never succeeded in working a change that was an improvement. Another dealer told a story along this line, the incident he related being so far back that the wound had entirely healed. "I had a competitor who was meaner than a hog," he said. "I sold my share of lumber, but my dislike for the blank fool was so intense that I would like to have kicked him off the face of the earth. He was no re-

specter of his word, or of anything else so far as I ever learned. It was a two-yard town; I knew that one yard would never be permitted to monopolize the business, else I would have bought him out. I ought to have bought him out and run a blind, but I wasn't up to things in those days. So I kept my eye out for somebody to buy the villain out. One spring day there came along a quiet young fellow who suggested that he might go into the lumber trade if he found an opening to suit him. I tried to impress on his mind that there was no better opening than right in that town. I told him how many carloads the two yards sold and gave



"Tried to impress on his mind."

him other pointers that I would be very shy about giving anyone these days. Would I sell out? Well, hardly, but he might try the other fellow. He wandered over to the other fellow's yard, and the first I heard around town was that he had bought it. I jumped up and cracked my heels together. Finally the scamp was going! The young chap came on and his first move was to put in a delivery wagon. Of course I had to follow. Then he put in improvements around his premises and I, feeling greener than a fool, trailed along after him. I have noticed since that it is the original fellow that generally gets there, and in a short time I discovered that was just what he was doing. Always gentlemanly, always honorable, but he was a taking chap.

To tell the truth he outclassed me, and before the end of two years I wished that the old liar and hypocrite that I had been the means of getting out of town was back again. Three years from the time my new competitor started in he died, and I tell you there was put under the ground a decent man."

This was kind of a solemn ending of the recital, so I threw my overcoat over my shoulder and went up the street to the hotel to see what I could find good to eat.

THE ART OF LOOKING AT THINGS.

We have all noticed that at times we go as though the rails of life were oiled especially for us; good health, prosperous business, sunshine and refreshing dews all come our way, but of a sudden the wind will go out of our sails and sickness, financial loss and other unfavorable conditions will follow. In plain language, things seem to be going to the dogs. I have noticed that for days at a stretch I have seen yard man after yard man, and while they would be courteous, friendly and all that, they wouldn't talk right from the bottom of the business. When following the storm the yard man opened up as he did I said, "Now we have reached another period of talk;" and sure enough the very next man I saw went on to philosophize like a second Plato.

"I have read," he observed, "what you have said about some dealers being unable to find suitable yards to buy. They never will find them by sitting down at home. If I should want to buy a yard I should expect to find one, but, not without looking it up. It is here as it is up in the Klondike—if a fellow finds a rich strike he must hunt for it. There is no telling how much we may find in this world if we will only hunt for it.

"There are plenty of dealers who never seem to look for bargains when they are buying. There are housewives

who never know they want sugar or tea until the last spoonful is gone, and that is the way with some retail dealers regarding stock. They do not think of ordering an item until they are out of it, and then they want it quick, and consequently have no time to look around to buy to advantage. When a man sees he is running low on a certain grade of stuff he ought to begin to beat around and see where he can pick it up at prices which are right. The



"As it is up in the Klondike."

time to buy lumber is when the buyer is not in a hurry, but when the seller is. That is when you get your dollar's worth. I don't care how stiff prices are, give me time to hunt a little and if I don't buy so as to make 6 percent on my money, figuring on the basis of the list, I don't count myself in it.

"Suppose I am running a yard here and you are running one down on the other track. I pay the list price; you shave those prices to an extent that the reduction amounts to 6 percent on your money. As compared with me you have already made 6 percent, and why shouldn't you feel easy? You really have made a fair investment, and then

right on top of that you will begin to rake in your profits on sales. I have made no investment that is paying me, and in order to make a cent I must begin to turn my lumber over. Or, look at it in another way: You have already made a profit of 6 percent over me. We are selling at, say, a profit of 10 percent. Every time I sell I make 10 percent; every time you make a sale you clear up a 16 percent. Do you see that if it should come to a rub you could knock me galley west? Other things being equal, the leverage you had on me would lift me out of your way.

"I never could get along without hunting for customers. I want to be on the lookout for them at every turn. They must be baited and rebaited. Have you ever tried to trap a rat when you have given up hopes almost that you would get him? Night after night he would sniff around the bait and never touch it; then unexpectedly you would hear a squeal and you would know you had him. In an effort to draw customers we should not let up a minute, and if the bait is made seductive enough we will get them sure. You can't help getting them. I am a kind of an affinity feller. Under certain conditions people must buy lumber of you, of me, of somebody who is operating a yard. It becomes a matter of gravity. The next consideration is, do we know enough, and will we be to the trouble, to make the conditions?"

"What are the conditions? Well, there is a lot of 'em. Good buying, location, prices, good nature, figure in the conditions. For a year and a half I passed a grocer's door. I had never bought a cent's worth of the man and never expected to. But when he was out in front of his place and saw me pass he always knew me. He didn't seem to say, 'Pay me your money, and I'll be your friend; but we will be friends, anyway.' Up town where I left my order the grocer would nod good morning, mechanically jerk out his pencil and write down the items. One day the thought came to me, 'That man seems to take it as a matter of course that I should drive up to his place every morning and

leave my order.' Now, if there is anything I don't like it is this matter-of-course business. Every tradesman should be grateful for the patronage he receives, and he should let it be known, too. Unless we make it an object for it to do so the community is under no more obligations to buy lumber of us than water is to run up hill. I wish every young man who went into business would get it into his head that if he gets trade he must win it, and be worthy of it, too. The good natured fellow who sold potatoes and pickles won me over, and I have been trading with him for two years. And I feel confident that should I go elsewhere to buy my stuff this man would appear just as friendly as he does today. The community likes such a man. When a fellow shows that he is for nothing but self nobody cares for him. I tell you in front we ought to put on: When we see a man driving past our place with a load of lumber salute and treat him just as friendly as though the lumber came out of our own yards. Believe me, he will remember it. It is a cheap way of sowing a seed that may bear many fold."

I guess the dealer thought he had pumped all the lumber lore into me that I could hold at one time, for suddenly looking at his watch he said there was a ball game in town that afternoon, and if it would suit me we would "go out and see 'em muff 'em."

Didn't this dealer get off some good ideas? Don't you think that if every yard man should paste in his hat the little remark, "The time to buy lumber is when the buyer is not in a hurry, but when the seller is," and act on it, it would make him enough money to build a mansion? What do you think about the affinity idea? Do you think that if we only made the conditions right trade would come to us as a matter of gravity? You will readily see those are not thoughts which chumps think, no matter whether they dovetail with our ideas or not.

EXCUSES FOR SCRAPPING.

There is a lot of fighting these days. Several towns could be named where competition in trade is as hot as the weather. I never like to see this condition, but if it must be I do enjoy listening to what the contestants have to say about it.

One yard man said: "I started in here to do a fair and square business. It was not my intention to cut prices, and I made no demand for any portion of the trade. The trade I could get on legitimate grounds I thought I would be entitled to, and with that trade I should be satisfied, but So-and-So at once dropped the price of several items to the cost mark, to crowd me out. I had to follow suit, and here we are. You know a hog won't drive worth a continental. Maybe you can go along ahead of him and coax him with an ear of corn, but you can't drive him. I don't know that it would suit me for anybody else to call me a hog; but that is the position. I do not expect to stay a thousand years, but put it down that, the Lord willing, I will be here a long time after the other fellow has got tired."

The "other fellow" was seen, and he took it as a matter of course that he should do his best to lift his competitor out. "There was no place here for another yard," was his excuse.

Who showed the Christian spirit in the matter? If the new man had a mind to put a new yard in that town whose business was it except his own? The idea entertained by so many yard men that they are exclusive owners of the trade of any territory is erroneous, from the fact that so many of them wake up some fine morning to find out they do not own it. The business man may as well make up his mind to meet competition, for he will be obliged to meet it. The dropping of prices to cost by the man who has been longest on the ground was an act of shortsightedness. The better way would have been to meet the new comer as one man should meet another, discuss the situation and, having

discussed it, make the best of it. Not infrequently the other fellow is as reasonable as we are.

Another yard man was telling me how he would conduct the campaign. "I am going to sell as little lumber as possible," said he. "I will let the others sell it. I will bid on bills to a point where I can save myself, and then quit."

Maybe this will work and maybe it won't. It recalled to mind the comments on the same subject by a veteran in the retail trade who, by the way, has stayed out several scraps. "If it is a fight it must be a fight," he remarked. "The public knows pretty well whether a man is putting up a good stiff fight or sneaking around the corners. I would never think of going into a fight unless I could sell at least as many bills as my competitor did. If I let the bills go by me the people will begin to say, 'He can't figure on lumber; the other fellows beat him every time;' and by and by when they want lumber they will go to the other dealers, expecting to get it cheaper of them than they could of me. No, sir! I wouldn't fight unless I expected to sell the stuff."

If you have a fight in prospect, so far as these opinions are concerned you can pay your money and take your choice. The best way, however, is not to fight if you can help it. If you do scrap with much earnestness I will bet you a hat that sooner or later you will regret it. If you get the worst of it you will surely regret it.

AN ADVERTISING SUGGESTION.

It ought to require no argument these days to show that the business man who does not advertise is not making the most of his opportunities, yet there are thousands of men selling goods of every kind who have no idea what a trade-getter the right kind of advertising is. At the same time a man can slip up on advertising as easily as he can on glare ice. Three months ago I saw the ad of a yard man in a local paper, and last week I saw that same ad again—the

same old thing, word for word. The yard man paid for the space in the paper hoping, of course, that it would do him good. He naturally expected to be benefited by it, but he probably was not to any great extent. The world is full of people who will not read the same ad the second time any more than they will read the same piece of news twice. You know you won't; I know I won't, and we must judge others by ourselves. Then when we consider that month after month the same readers peruse the local paper we can understand how senseless it is to lay before them an unattractive ad that typographically or otherwise is not changed the year



"It interests the household."

round. Instead of keeping a standing ad for three months this lumberman ought every week to be firing a new kind of shot into the farmers and carpenters. He ought to be working his thinker a good many minutes every day concocting the best possible things to say to the lumber-buying public. If necessary he should get right down on his haunches to do this thinking; he should be willing to work as hard at it as he would unloading a car of lumber.

When you buy space in a newspaper you have simply the foundation. On that foundation you can raise a beauti-

ful structure composed of fancy and facts—a structure that the reader will stop to look at, as the traveler will stop to look at a large, unique or beautiful building by the wayside.

I have spoken before about getting the addresses of the farmers in the territory that you might hope to reach, and mailing them lumber literature. It is a good idea. The very mail feature of it is of value. There are farmers who are not heavy patrons of the postoffice. They may, or may not, take a local paper. When they come home from town and pull a piece of mail from their pocket it is a sort of innovation. It interests the household. The old lady wants to read every word there is in it. The farmer, himself, feels a little elated that he should have something fired right at him direct. Then, do not have the subject matter in these circulars too meager. The mere announcement that you sell lumber is not enough. Talk to the farmer. Chat with him on paper just as you would were you sitting on his doorstep. Make him feel proud that he is a farmer. Make the circular a sort of magnet that will draw him to your office whether he wants any lumber or not.

Do you know there is a good point to that—this drawing people to you? A yard man recently said to me he could not understand how a man could make a big success of the lumber business unless he knew a good deal more than lumber. This man keeps posted on the markets. The farmer who drops in to see him can get the freshest news concerning the cattle, hog and corn markets. He makes himself useful to the farmer—that is the idea. You know how we run after a man when we think he can be of service to us. This yard man also tells me that he never rides to solicit trade, and rarely outside of his office approaches a man on the subject of buying lumber. The farmers come to him, and in this way he learns what they are intending to do and what their neighbors are expecting to do.

To return to the mail business: Maybe I can give you a pointer that will be worth a cent to you. A yard man

who has brains to burn told me that he sent a man out to canvass his territory—his own county and those adjoining it—for the correct names and postoffice addresses of the farmers. It would take some money, you know, to do that. It would involve the services of a man and a horse for several days, and I do not suppose that nine in ten of the retail dealers of the country would any more think of doing it than they would think of slapping say a hundred dollar bill into the missionary contribution box. But note the outcome of it. Having used the list for his trade benefit he sold it to eastern houses which do a mail business to such advantage that he made \$100 over and above all expenses. Now and then the farmer receives circulars from houses in Maine, New York, Boston and elsewhere, calling his attention to everything from a worthless gimcrack to a piano or wagon, and he pulls a hayseed from his whiskers and wonders how those fellows knew anything about him. They get his name from these lists they buy, and this yard man was "onto it." The way that a brainy man will work things surpasseth the understanding of the man whose head is filled with sawdust.

KNOWING WHAT LUMBER IS WANTED FOR.

Although the day was as hot as a pepper pod I stripped off my coat and helped to shove on a jag of lumber. I frequently do this, so that when I am out among the wholesale men and am asked if I am a practical lumberman that I should be talking about the retail lumber business all the time, and advising the yard men how to run their yards, I can tell them I work at it right along. Only yesterday I was in a yard and threw on a bundle of lath; the day before I loaded a post or two, and in that way I keep my hand in and make myself useful to the men whose yards I visit.

A carpenter was after that stuff I was helping to load and we had a great time fitting him out with what he

wanted. We pulled out this board and that one, but it did not just suit him. Then it occurred to the yard man to ask him what he wanted those few particular boards for, and he said for stairs. It was then easy sailing. The carpenter, who might have known more about lumber than he did, was calling for D select, and I think we handled over nearly all the lumber of that grade in the yard trying to please him. Once known what the lumber was for, the yard man went to his pile of C select, and the carpenter really seemed pleased that he was helped out.

This was no staggering event of itself, yet it illustrates the fact that for the interest of everybody concerned it is best for the yard man to know to what use the lumber called for is to be put. It saves time, often pleases the customer, and not infrequently makes a little money. It does not take long to ask the question. For myself, I have great faith in the judgment of the average yard man when it comes to a knowledge of the kind of board that will properly fit a certain place. So far as the eternal fitness of things is concerned the carpenter isn't in it with him. The carpenter has one or two jobs in the season; the yard man is coming in contact with builders all the time, and generally knows the grade of lumber used by them for specific purposes. The yard man lacks only the mechanical training to make a successful builder.

After we had got the jag of lumber off we went down the street to a restaurant, filled up on pop, came back, stuck some excellent cigars between our teeth and, leaning back with our feet on the window sill, entered into that sweet, independent repose which comes—and I may say comes only—to the man who labors.

SHED DEFECTS.

This shed question will never down in the lumber world. It is as live as a hornet. Yard men talk about sheds wherever I go. No doubt two-thirds of the retail lumbermen of these great prairie states have shed on the brain. They want to know the right kind to build, and many a man who already has a shed wishes the blamed thing was in tophet, so that the next time he could do better. "You seem to be a man of positive opinions," a retail dealer wrote me a few weeks ago. That is so, probably. My best girl says that once my mind is set I am hard headed; and she knows me. I am not hard headed on the shed question, however, for I couldn't picture the ideal shed if I should try. I have seen hundreds of them, but my mind isn't made up yet. I have traveled thousands of miles to see sheds.

You know yourself how it is in the girl line; a fellow will tell you that some particular girl is pretty—he will undoubtedly say she is a peach. When you get the chance you look her over. You may detect that she has bad teeth; that she followed the heathenish custom of punching holes in her ears so that gold washed trinkets may dangle from them; that she has been so fond of the hugging act that she has worn corsets which have brought her waist down to the size of an angleworm; and you say, "No, those things do not go with beauty."

It is something like that with sheds. There is generally some defect. I have seen comparatively few sheds the owners of which did not declare they would change in some respects if they could. Within a week four of these complaints have been registered. One dealer said they might talk about high sheds all they wanted to, but he did not want another. He wanted his work down to earth. "That upper story is a bugbear to me," said he. "The idea of shoving lumber up and up and up!"

Another yard man has a flat roof on his shed, and he swore—actually swore—that he would never have another.

"Take such weather as we have had this season and you might as well be under a sun glass," was the way he put it. Still another who had built the bents sixteen and twenty feet wide was wondering what kind of a "jackass" he was when he was doing it. Mind you, I do not call him that long eared animal; he applied the name himself. "The next time I would make them seventeen and twenty-one, so that 16 and 20-foot stuff could be accommodated without a



"Kiss my family good bye."

foot of it protruding into the alley as it does now," he explained. In another shed the owner lifted up some boards which were damp and stained. "We have been obliged to take lumber out of here to keep it from spoiling," he said. The yard men who protest openly in this way are frank individuals. There are others not so frank who grin and bear it. The world is not full of people who would have us infer that they never make a mistake, but there are many of them. Your eyes, however, settle the question. You see at a glance, as the poet said, that "someone has blundered." "How do you get those timbers in there?" I asked a yard man who was showing me his place.

"By main strength and awkwardness, blank it!" was the reply.

"And how would you remedy it?" was asked.

"Easy enough. Any man who builds a shed minus out-

foot of it protruding into the alley as it does now," he explained.

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side doors through which to shove stuff has not learned the a b c of the shed religion."

One point in proper shed building is such an arrangement that the material housed in it can be handled with the greatest possible ease. In fewer words, the shed should be convenient. As the lawyers say, that may seem to you like a self-evident fact, but it will bear saying. In a large shed a prospective customer wanted to see a certain grade of lumber, and telling him to "come on" the yard man led the way up toward the loft. He climbed to the platform and then up another ladder he went. "Are you going up to heaven?" the customer asked. I gently put the question to the dealer, how he liked such climbing, and he shook his head and, switching a handkerchief from his hip pocket, wiped the perspiration from his forehead. He didn't act as though it was any fun to show lumber under such circumstances. He did not say that a man to run such a place should be half man and half squirrel, but he looked it. I have reached the point that my faith is not much larger than a mustard seed in the shed that looms up like the Washington monument. I have heard yard men who have this kind of shed deplore the fact that their lumber could not be elevated by other than man power. If they could have water, electric or horse power they would be happier.

Then there is another great desideratum, and that is ventilation. Many a shed is deficient in this. Within a month I saw a shed that when the doors were closed had no more ventilation than a barn. "We depend on the doors in each end," the yard man said.

"Do you keep the doors open all winter?" was asked. I was conscious that the question partook of the caustic, but the fellow was not very social, and I didn't much care what I did say to him. When a man has not at least a pint of the milk of human kindness in him I would as soon as not put a little blister plaster on him.

You know we Americans who so delight to go head on are great on the abstract. I don't say we don't

think, but we don't think enough. "A shed! a shed!" is the cry of a thousand and one yard men, but they are considering the shed only in the abstract. To those details which should make a lumber shed worthy of the name they give little thought. Their object is reached when they have a roofed structure. Be not deceived, beloved, in this regard. You may have some plan that looks nice on paper, but ten to one the worm that causes the canker is lurking in it. Knowing as little about sheds as I do, if I were you and intending to build a shed that was to cost from \$1,000 up to four times that amount, I would pack my grip, bone the railroad over which I shipped for a pass, kiss my family good-bye, start out and see every shed I could. I was talking with a professor of music last night who is in quest of a good violin and who has received an instrument on trial from a New York music house. "I told them," he said, "that I must keep the instrument at least a month before I would decide whether I want it. If purchased hastily I might tire of it; and it is easier to buy a violin than it is to sell it."

There is a heap of common sense in that remark. It is awfully easy to buy a thing if we have the money. It is easy building a shed if we have the money, but it is probably something that will stay by us for years, and we want it built about right.

The anti-shed men grasp every objection to a shed that comes to the surface and exclaim: "Didn't I tell you so?" There are doubtless those among them who will frame the objections cited above and hang them up in their offices. There is one of these men in Wisconsin who, I believe, dislikes me for the reason that I have now and then held that the closed shed is the proper thing. That is, he dislikes me in that spot. Otherwise we get along capitally. He sets up the cigars and things, takes me around town behind his fast pacer and has asked me a half dozen times to come and see him since I was there the last time. At that time he requested me to take off my hat in his office, and when I had

politely done so he said it was a mystery to him how any man whose brow was so high as mine and whose ears were as small could, from a business standpoint, advocate the putting of say \$2,500 in a lumber shed when the most of that expense could be avoided and the lumber just as well, if not better, cared for. If everything hinged on the cost I asked him why he didn't wear a hickory shirt that would cost 50 cents instead of the white one made to order with the big diamond blazing from the front of it. And there the matter dropped.

So much depends on taste. Some of the prominent firms in the big cities erect palatial business places when no doubt they could have got along if they had continued in more modest quarters. There are men, however, who are proud of their business, proud of the success they have made of it, and they want other folks to know it. I could almost see the bosom of a yard man swell with pride

who was recently showing "A big diamond blazing from it." me his shed. Down the street were his neighbors, who were selling merchandise in good buildings, and he too, was selling lumber in a good one. He wanted to size up creditably with his fellow-citizens. That is an ambition that some men have, you know, and there is nothing wrong in it, either, that I see.

All that sounds well enough, but the rights and privileges of those business men who regard the matter in the light of what they call extravagant surroundings must be respected and protected. Not long ago an open-shed advocate was explaining to me how he could build a shed that in



his opinion would answer every purpose for \$1 a lineal foot. That was without the battens for the roof; if battens are used the cost would be 10 cents a foot extra. I took delight in seeing this man figure it out. He is going his own way, and he is going it the best he knows how. Wanting open sheds, it is his intention that they shall cost the least possible amount of money.

The man who explained the dollar-a-foot shed is a crackerjack of a lumberman, and it occurred to me I should like to see him established in business alongside of a man who was also a crackerjack—one with a shed costing \$1 a foot and the other with a fine modern enclosed shed, and, other things being equal, see which would pull the larger trade. Of course, in a sense the above statement is rank nonsense, as there is no such condition as "other things being equal." The most of us are in the habit of using the term, but as no two things or conditions are exactly alike they cannot be equal. But to drop this splitting of hairs, who do you think would come out winner?

The largest retail business in the northwest, in the territory over which I have traveled, is from a closed shed. This of course proves nothing, yet it is a straw to which a closed shed advocate might point. Maybe he might say: "There, doesn't the boss lumberman know his business?" The closed shed is no doubt a trade puller. Scores of these sheds have their defects, but the virtue of drawing trade must be entered to their credit. Particularly does a farmer want to know that he is getting dry lumber. I hope not a man of you takes a mean advantage of your customers, but if you have a shed and incidentally say to a man who is looking around with the intention of buying lumber that your stock is all kept under roof and is therefore bright and dry, don't you think that your competitor who has open sheds, with his coarse stock piled on the prairie with nothing to shelter it from rain and wind, would have to do some shouting to overcome the argument? That, however, is not a mean advantage to take of a customer, for you are probably speak-

ing the truth and at the same time not saying a word against the quality of your neighbor's stock.

A yard man told me the other day that his figures on a bill were \$8 more than those of his neighbor, yet he sold the lumber, the closed shed argument doing the work. Not long ago when sitting in a shed reducing a lath to shavings while the yard man went to talk business with a granger who had the building of a barn in view, I overheard the yard man say that his dimension, being kept under cover, was straight and dry and therefore a frame could be put up from it that was right.

That is an argument that a man who is in quest of lumber does not let in at one ear and out of the other. It appeals to all the common sense he has. You or I might think there was not much in it, but the man who is intending to put up the frame is not looking through our eyes. He sees your dimension under cover and your neighbor's piled in the open air, and he must indeed be a person of thick skull if he does not reason from cause to effect. He can plainly see that no rain falls upon the dimension that is under roof, and that the dimension in the other yard is out in every rain-storm that comes that way. To tell which lumber under these circumstances he will favor is nearly as easy as tumbling off a log.

You know the characteristics of the red cedar shingle. Water can no more injure it than it can a duck. By many builders the hose is turned on this shingle before it is nailed to the roof. An occasional rainstorm would do a pile of red cedars good. A lumberman told me the other day, however, that from a commercial point of view the place to keep the red cedar shingles is under cover. "Farmers will buy them quicker," said he. "They do not want to see a shingle lying out in the sun and rain. They think it is being abused and that such treatment will deteriorate it."

There are yard men who swear by open sheds who are not aware, I believe, that their competitors who have modern sheds are piling up arguments every day in favor of lumber that is under roof; but they are. "In advertising the shed

is my catchword," said a yard man who has a shed which even a blue-blooded lumberman ought to feel was good enough for him. When this yard man advertises in his local papers he calls attention to the fact that his lumber is kept under cover and is consequently dry.

A yard man who has a shed that is enclosed went with me to the yard of one of his neighbors and, finding it running itself, we walked out through the alleys and spied out the country. "Gee!" remarked the yard man, "see the shape the lumber on top of those piles is in!"

And sure enough it was in bad shape. This season in this section has been one of the worst on record for lumber. For a long time it rained nearly every night, and then it would be hot enough the next day to hatch eggs. To keep lumber in decent shape it was necessary to go over the piles often and turn the top boards. This duty has been neglected in the yard in question, and the result was an eyesore. "When I see a thing like that I thank my stars that I have a shed," the yard man remarked.

Then we came upon a pile of 8x8 timber, some of the pieces badly warped. "No doubt those timbers have lain there two years, and what are they good for? Nothing, if length is required, for all that can be done with them is to saw them up into short lengths. I used to keep timber that way, but I don't do it any more."

Rather pertinent suggestions these were, and they could be taken home by more than one retail lumberman of this glorious country. I wish I had kept tab on the number of yards visited in which I have seen timbers warped out of shape. Too often they are thrown down at one side of the yard and left to shift for themselves. Yard men who call themselves up to snuff do this, too. The timber screw is loose in their heads. In one yard the timber was nicely stuck and covered with cheap boards. "Those No. 4 boards are less valuable than the timber," was the way the yard man put it.

We had held down the office chairs a few minutes when the rightful owner came gliding down the street on his bike,

and said he was glad to see us. He said his man was sick that day, a carpenter was working at his house and he didn't know which end he stood on.

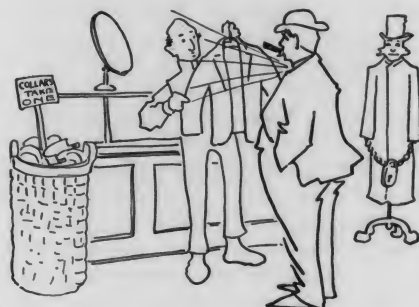
"I have been thinking about building a shed," he remarked, after he had settled down, "but don't know just how to go at it. There are sheds not a hundred miles from here that are flat failures, as I look at it. There is no sense putting hundreds of dollars into a shed unless it will do the business." I told him that his head was plumb. Then we talked shed for a straight hour. We discussed the high and low, long and short, ventilated and unventilated sheds. He said he was going to think the matter over.

MIXING IMPLEMENTS AND LUMBER.

I have never happened to hear a yard man brag of the profits made in the agricultural implement trade. Years ago when the western farmer was poorer than Job's old turkey and had to pay three prices for his machinery the middle man had a bonanza. In those days the yard man would sell a harvester and bank a clean \$100 as the result. That was a historic period, however, and may its like never show its face again. When a lot of us nabobs take undue advantage of our neighbors in the matter of prices, roll up wealth and live higher than we are entitled to somebody unjustly suffers. That is a social law that no logic can down. There are the great scales forever hanging in place and unless they balance some one is getting an unjust deal. The affairs of life are so complicated that we may be unable to single out that some one, but he is somewhere.

When I hear of the prices which the farmers in an earlier day in this western country were obliged to pay for the necessities of life I do not wonder they have so often waged war on the middle man. And prices on many articles of merchandise out here even now are nearly high enough, thank you. I was recently obliged to sit in court

where stolen merchandise was identified, and during the process the tradesmen from whom the goods were taken had to disclose the cost mark as well as the retail price, and the difference between the two was often a round 100 percent. Now I am not going to pay a merchant 100 percent profit if I can get the same goods for less money, are you? Without asking the question I know you are not. You see if we are not just to others; if when dealing with them we



"They make my eyes stick out."

dig a hole in the ground and bury the golden rule as sure as you live some day they will turn on us and nip our heels.

I recently had a chat with a yard man who handles farm implements and he was telling the same story I have heard so many times that from a financial standpoint it was not highly satisfactory. There are yard men who may think I am impudent, but in order to get at the true inwardness of some things and often at the hocus pocus of other things, questions must be asked which may appear out of place, unwarranted and even silly. I once heard this denominated as "blank newspaper cheek." All my friends have to do in such cases, however, is to forgive me, and then we will go right along again as though the thing had never happened.

This yard man was asked if the selling of farm machin-

ery went so against the grain why he continued to sell it year after year. Of course it was really none of my business why he continued to sell it, but the reply brought out an answer that may be of interest to you. There was some common sense in it, too, I thought. "The bother of it," he said, "outweighs the direct profit, I am inclined to think, but competition in lumber in this little town is pretty hot. I am the only man here who sells farm machinery, and I continue to sell it for the reason that it brings me in touch with men of whom otherwise I would see little. First and last nearly all the farmers in this territory drift in here, and I am all the time feeling of them to find out if they are intending to do anything in the way of building. I sell all the machinery, and I know I sell my full share of lumber. Now I don't stick the top notch price on my implements. I would rather a man would get the impression that he can buy a plow or mower a little cheaper of me than he can buy it over to the next town. Once a farmer finds that out he is inclined to think that if I sell implements worth the money I will also sell lumber worth the money. It does not always follow of course, but I would rather the farmers would think that way than otherwise."

"Then your implement business is more than anything else a feeder to your lumber traffic?"

"That is it exactly. If it wasn't for that I would sell out the machinery as fast as I could, and stay out. I might run it as an independent business if I had nothing else on hand, but I wouldn't mix it with lumber unless I thought it helped my lumber trade."

Evidently this man's first love is lumber, and all this time he is manipulating the machinery deal to help his lumber trade. His idea, as you have seen, is to get the farmers to come to his place and then talk crib, barn and house to them. No doubt his implement business makes him some money. It may give him bother, but I hardly think that all these years he would be sending good dollars after poor ones. He ranks his machinery, however, as the grocer

ranks his sugar boxes or the dry goods man his pile of sheeting—as leaders. This man sells a large amount of lumber and how much of his lumber trade is due to his traffic in implements would of course be past finding out. It is a sort of advertising proposition. If you advertise in your local papers and during that time build up a good trade it is impossible to tell how much of that trade is a result of advertising. The direct results of any species of advertising can rarely be reached; but if you have the trade you are satisfied. Moreover, this yard man in lumber and implements has hustled together thousands of dollars, and that is what tells the business end of the story.

CHARACTERISTICS OF TRADE.

Having hung my overcoat on the back of a chair, we had not chatted five minutes before the yard man asked me to see the business he had done during the year. Then he opened his books and showed me his sales month by month. They were heavier than at the first of the year he expected they would be and as a result he was feeling good. So did I. I regard the retailers of the country as one big family and never hear of their prosperity without rejoicing with them.

This same man is a crackerjack of a lumberman—you are safe to wager your new hat on that. He has learned the business from a to z; and to start with he had the head to learn it. No matter how enthusiastic in our business we may be we must have the head, or we will never make progress that will stun a community. A head is a necessary foundation for any business.

As we were spreading ourselves around a hot stove this yard man gave expression to a bit of shrewd retail lore.

If you didn't know what this man was up to you might call him a dimension crank. He appears to be positively gone on fine piece stuff. If he were offered a low grade

of No. 1 at a price that might cause us to jump for it as a trout would jump for a fly he would sit back in his chair and not show a sign. Offer to give him No. 2 dimension and he wouldn't take it if a condition was that he must retail it from his yard. This man has not been in his present location long and he has set about to build up a trade along the lines which please his customers. There are several of us who appear to be ignorant of the fact, or to forget it, that there are trade methods of that nature. Our intention to please may be all right but we do not make a study of what will please.

A month ago I was in an office when a customer was settling his bill that amounted to sixty odd dollars, and a discussion arose over some item that was charged at \$1.25. I should judge from the cut of this man's jib that he might live in town and had been making improvements in his house. Notwithstanding who he was, I know that some men are mighty provoking when they come to settle their bills. They will walk on our necks if we will let them. This customer strenuously objected to the charge and he looked as though he was honest in it. What I disliked, however, was to see the yard man go up in the air, as we say of trotting horses. Just at the time when his temper should have done him good service it went on a strike. He did not bluster and blow and swear, but it was plain that internally he was a good deal agitated. He forgot to be a diplomat. He slammed the book shut and said in a crisp way that it wouldn't make any great difference to him a hundred years from now! It is very hard for average people to understand sarcasm and irony. They take you as you say, or they don't take you as you mean, and everything considered it is perhaps as well in every day business life to talk good plain English. It carries farther than the whole batch of the other ways of expression.

This office was close to a railroad track and across the street I could see from where I sat a horse hitched to a post. A locomotive came puffing along and this horse stuck up his

head and started in to dance a jig. Some well meaning man who was passing took the horse by the bit and patted and stroked his neck. He no doubt spoke kind and soothing words to him, but those I could not hear. The effect of such treatment is generally the same whether on man or beast. The horse cooled down. The yard man ought to have handled this customer in some such way as that. The customer was a little putchy, as we used to say back east when we were boys, but no doubt he could have been cooled down in three minutes. All on account of that little feeling over that insignificant \$1.25 the yard man may have lost



"Patted and stroked his neck."

a customer. I do not claim for a minute that the yard man should have knuckled to this customer and thrown off the item when he knew he had the goods; what I objected to was the spirit he showed in the matter. In the ordinary trade dealings it ought to take more than \$1.25 to make us mad. That amount will not pay for the wear and tear. To be hired I wouldn't get mad this minute for a \$10 bill, for if I should the chances are I would kick my old typewriter out the window, and it would take more money than I would get in the next week to have it put in shape again.

Firmness, when backed by kindness, goes a long way. When we let any man run over us any one minute in the year we make a mistake, and when we show a disposition that may lead others to think that we would run over them it is another mistake. It is surprising how differences can be adjusted if we go at it in the right spirit. But when we are mad we don't know who we are or where we are at.

Now we will bring up the yard man who for the time being was sidetracked. I knew his passion for fine dimension, but had not up to that date gotten at the true inwardness of it. You know that a man who will not tell you a thing today may tell it to you tomorrow. Today he may think it of no consequence to tell you, or he may not be in the mood. In company with the little spider we must try, try again. That is the way we fellows who are on a sly hunt for something which we hope may interest you have to angle around. One day when the hook is thrown into a hole there isn't a nibble; the next day the whole outfit, bob, hook and sinker, is swallowed. This yard man was feeling first rate over the year's business; sitting there by the stove with the cold December winds beating against the windows a sense of comfort cheered him; and then I guess we were glad to see each other. I know I was glad to see him. These things tend to open a man's heart. And you know it makes a vast difference whether a man's heart is opened or whether it is only his mouth. I wouldn't give a cent to talk all day with the best lumberman in North America who would just talk with his mouth.

"I want none but fine dimension in my shed," said this yard man. "When a farmer comes in to buy lumber it is the dimension he looks at. If it is bright and straight and clean he thinks you have a great stock of lumber. He does not expect to be shown the finishing stuff, for he doesn't know anything about finish. What does he know about letters of the alphabet when they are used to designate grades of lumber? Then it is the finish—the very lumber

that the farmer does not want to see—that can be manipulated so there is money in it!"

I do not know what your verdict may be, but I call that shrewd.

Along the line of the above, namely, that of pleasing customers, I want to add another illustration. The most of us are anxious to sell as many dollars' worth of lumber as we possibly can. If a farmer, worth his fine farm all paid for, should come in with a large barn bill calling for, say, \$900 worth of material we would like his account to run up to those figures. That is as natural as it is to breathe. But all rules have their exceptions. A barn bill of this character was presented to these men alluded to and one of them, being posted on the various methods of construction, said to the farmer that he was on the road to paying too much money for his barn. Then he figured out to him how much could be saved. Where he thought the plan needed changing he changed it. He reduced the size of some of the dimension. He put in box sills instead of solid timbers. Where the specifications called for C finish for frames and doors he led the farmer to see clearly that a lower grade of lumber would answer as well. When all these changes had been made the farmer found that he was in pocket about an even \$100.

What would you think of a man who would spend hours of his time showing you how you could save \$100? And this, too, where you had not the slightest idea it could be saved? Wouldn't you tie to him? Wouldn't you say to your neighbors that there was the man for them to deal with? You would sing his praises every opportunity you had. He would own your trade as long as you bought lumber and he sold it.

There is many a tradesman in and out of the lumber business whose aim it is to make the most money possible out of every individual deal. But that isn't the way to build up a trade that will stay by you. David Harum's injunction, "Do unto the other feller as he would do unto you—

and do it fust," is both unique and amusing, but it is neither honest nor good business. If it is a man's intention to get all the money, honestly or otherwise, that he can he may as well go out the first dark night and rob a bank. When we have made the last analysis it is as much our duty to look out for the interest of the other fellow as it is to protect our own. I do not suppose that all of us sell lumber on this principle every day, but we ought to. The old golden rule is a good enough guide board for anybody. And it has this advantage: If we go in the way it points we never regret it.

VALUE OF APPEARANCE.

Do you ever stop to reflect what a factor appearance is in human affairs? Did it not have nearly all to do with the selection of the town in which you decided to make your home, and even with the selection of your wife? It is fairly safe to say that if the contour of the face of the girl you married had been slightly different, her eyes or hair another color, she would have fried bacon for some other fellow. We like to have it thought that we fell in love with our wives because of their angelic temper, but the cold fact is that nine-tenths of us were dead in love with them before we knew they had a temper. At the start the attraction was physical, and if they turned out to have angelic tempers all the better for us.

When we know that it is really the influence of appearance that moves the world, why should we not have the good sense to carry the idea into our business? A few days ago I visited a town in which there are two yards. At one of them I chatted awhile, and then went across town to the other. In front of the latter was a pond of water which started at the office and stretched along in front of the yard. When a team drove in or out of the yard it was splash, splash, splash! When I visited the first yard and saw it graded up around the premises and everything high

and dry above the water, which on every hand was accumulating from the melting snow, I didn't give it particular thought until I saw the neighbor's premises. We know little except by comparison. Had there been none but white men in the world the idea of calling us white would never have occurred, and were there no bad men the idea of calling us good would not have entered the heads of all those who know us. We are known as good simply because others are known as bad; therefore it seems to me



"Located on Lake Mud."

that we ought not to bear down on our opposites too roundly, for were it not for them it would never be known what virtuous fellows we are.

This last yard man was of course consoling himself with the thought that the water in front of his place would not be there long. In a few days at the longest none of it would be seen. He said: "It is awfully muddy around here just now!" But there it is in the spring, fall, and following the heavy rains in the summer. I asked this dealer how long he had sold lumber at that stand and he said six years. No doubt for six years he has endured

the mud puddle. I hope you will not think I am finnick about these things. It is none of my business whether a man has one or four little ponds in front of his lumber yard. But here is the point—on my rounds I can't help noticing these things. If I were the only man who saw them I would keep still, but there are others who see them as quickly as I do. No doubt a hundred people had noticed that puddle of water and thought, and perhaps said, it was a case of shiftlessness.

The man whose yard is located on Lake Mud is not the leader of trade in his line in that town; and do you know why he should be? We will imagine he is as much off in a few other things as he is in this—don't you see how trade would be diverted from him? Why, bless you, we are right here touching on a law that is as inevitable as were those of the Medes and Persians. Socially this yard man is a good fellow. He couldn't have treated the assessor better than he did me, and I hope he will not know who I am singling out in this little article. To throw him off the track I will say that during this wet spring weather I have seen several mud puddles in front of lumber offices. Wherever they may be, however, the yard man would better haul in a few loads of gravel.

PROMPT PAYMENT AND OTHERWISE.

There are many varieties of payments. Some of us hardly do enough cash business to make a man wink if it were put in his eye. Then there are time payments stretching from thirty days to eternity.

As you are paid promptly and otherwise, so undoubtedly you pay in the same way. In common with thousands of other things, the matter of payment becomes a habit. I know a yard man who is backed with a load of money, yet he never thinks of discounting a bill. He will even ask extensions, and has been so glacial-like that there

are salesmen who do not try to sell him at all. I believe this is due largely to a habit of procrastination. This dealer expects to pay some time, of course—knows he will have to pay—but he puts off drawing the check from one hour to another, from one day to another, and thus time slides away from him. I may not be right in this diagnosis, but I am willing to think it is so. When we know a good fellow and he has a fault or two I believe we should be very charitable in dealing with him, especially when it doesn't cost us



"The way he wore his hat."

anything, for the first we may know we may want him to be overlooking some little rot spot in ourselves. We all have them, and somebody knows about them, too.

A yard man discussed the subject of prompt payment. "My discounts amount to \$600 or \$800 a year, and will about pay a good man," said he. "If I want money I can go to my bank and get it. They know what I am doing and how I am fixed. If I want a loan they know it is because for the time being I cannot swing things to my satisfaction. If I should go to staving bills off with the men of whom I buy my lumber they would not know what the matter was."

This is undoubtedly good business policy, but it is not everybody who believes in it, however.

I was in a yard the proprietor of which wore his hat tipped forward, which means that he is a man of marked characteristics. The man who goes around with his hat pulled down over his eyes is independent, pugnacious, secretive, and sometimes mean. I do not say it invariably indicates a mean streak, for maybe a few readers of this chapter wear their hats in that way. This dealer touched on the question of payments. "The matter of payments causes me no worry," said he. "I pay my debts sometime—that is dead sure. If I pay in thirty days it is all right—if not, it is all right. The wholesale merchant who is particular as to this is not obliged to sell me lumber. Today I have \$9,000 on my books that is as good as the wheat, but to get that money within thirty days would be an impossibility. And when Mr. Wholesaler has bills on his books which he knows will come I don't know why a little time should make any more difference with him than it does with me. He probably does not want to use the money that is due him any more than I do the money that is due me."

I had never heard a yard man talk precisely like this before, and I attributed it to the way he wore his hat.

BILLS SHOULD GO WITH THE LUMBER.

There was no one in the office when I went in, so I arranged my new red necktie, pulled my pants up so they wouldn't get strained at the knee and waited for somebody to put in an appearance. I could hear two men talking in another room about the difference in the price of something. They did not get excited, but one said he was sure that was the price named to him, and the other one said he would never think of making such a price to anybody. I couldn't get the whole drift of the conversation and didn't want to. A fellow feels like a thief in the

night when he is obliged to sit and listen to a conversation that is intended to be private. I almost felt like whittling out some wooden plugs and sticking them in my ears.

In a few minutes the yard man and his customer came from the private office. The customer unhitched his horse and drove away and, as good luck would have it, in less than five minutes the lumberman touched upon the private office episode.



"Waited for somebody to come in."

"That man that just left here made some repairs on his house last summer," he explained. "Among other things he put in a new front door. The price of it was \$4.50. He insisted that I priced it to him at \$2.50. I had a door at that price, no doubt showed it to him and he got them mixed. It has been nearly four months now since the stuff was bought, and a man can forget and mix up a great many things in that time. There was a lot of porch material, maple flooring etc., and he had the prices of them all

down pat. What did I do? Allowed it of course. Don't know as I ought to, but he is one of those positive men who think they know as much as anybody, and in addition he is buying stuff of me right along. I am putting him in his winter's coal today."

You can see how the yard man felt. He was dealing with a good customer, and he thought that should he insist on the payment of the \$2 the customer might be lost to him. You might have taken another course; you might have convinced the man that he was wrong. That is the way it goes; what one man does not feel like doing the next one would do with all his might.

I suggested that, as I looked at it, the only safe way when selling goods on credit is to furnish a bill to the purchaser, and the sooner after the sale is made the better, as then there can be no excuse for any misunderstanding. "You are not dealing with another merchant," I said. "The average buyer of lumber has not been trained in business methods. If he is bungle-headed and feels like disputing your bill he is going to do it."

"Blank it," he replied, "I know that is the way to do. In less than five minutes I could have given him a bill of that stuff, and then it would have been all straight."

It will be no news to you if I say that the retail lumbermen do a sight of haphazard work in this direction. There is probably not one dealer in a dozen who thinks of rendering a bill when the goods are delivered. The lumber is strung along to a job, the builder does not know how much lumber he is getting, further than that he supposes that his order is being filled. It is not, however, always being filled. For some reason it may not suit the convenience of the yard man to deliver all of it at the same time. He may be waiting for another car. The yard foreman may have made a mistake in tallying out the lumber. You will readily understand there may be a score of reasons why you would not immediately deliver entire a house or barn bill. You don't often do it. But if a bill is rendered for

every load that goes out—sent by the drayman, and by him given to the man for whom the lumber is intended, and the drayman takes a receipt back—then the yard man has done his duty, and he has done precisely what he should do if he aspires to do business on business principles. If the carpenter is on the house insist that he come down and see that he gets what the bill calls for. If he is not there have his best man attend to it. I know of no other way of cleaning up the thing as you go along, in order that it may be perfectly satisfactory to both parties once and for all. 'It requires a little work. Of course it does. But have you ever got into a snarl when you did not wish you had given the little work which would have prevented it?

An experience of this kind served to impress the importance of this bill business firmly in my mind. One fall when I bought coal in Chicago I received by mail the next morning a bill for it. The pile of coal and the amount billed did not, in my judgment, tally. I immediately saw the coal man, told him there was a mistake, that only two or three hodsful had been taken from the pile, and I wanted him to go and look at it. He knew me pretty well, for I had bought considerable coal of him, still he looked as though he thought I might be crazy or otherwise out of shape. It was of course running through the dealer's head that when a certain number of tons of coal was ordered at his office there was no good reason why that number should not have been delivered from his yards. He went over with me to look at the coal. "By George! That is right. There is no such amount of coal there. I think you have got about half the coal you ought to have," he said. He went back, investigated, and discovered that while five loads should have gone to my house only three were delivered. There was a hitch in the delivery system—simply one of those little mistakes that is liable to occur in the best of families.

Now what if no bill had been rendered? I should have thought that the coal man would put in the balance of the coal when he got around to it. At the end of thirty days

I should have gone to his office to pay for the coal I had. Ten tons at \$6 a ton!

"Oh, no, but I didn't have that amount!"

Then how many things the coal man might have thought. He might have thought that the coal had been burned, stolen, that the Dutch hired girl had swapped it for loud striped hosiery—there would be no end to the things he might have thought. The chances are that he would not



"Swapped it for loud striped hosiery."

have been satisfied, neither would I. Very likely the next time some other dealer would have sold me my winter's coal. The bill was really the means of keeping us good business friends.

We must remember that in order to do business successfully there ought to be two satisfied parties to every transaction, the man who sells the goods and the man who buys them. There must at any rate be one—the man who buys them—else he will not come our way the next time.

COMFORTABLE OFFICES.

The yard man was fitting storm sash, and he said he was going to see if he couldn't occupy his office this winter with some comfort. "Year after year I have nearly frozen out of here," he said.

It is surprising how many lumber offices there are which are the merest plugs. They are suited for neither warm nor cold weather. So located that they get the full blaze of the sun, without an awning or a friendly tree to give shade, in hot weather they are ovens; and without storm windows or even weather strips to keep the gale from whistling through numerous cracks in winter they breed chills up the backbone.

When I travel from a few to a good many miles to see a dealer I naturally like to sit and chat in a comfortable place. I know, however, there will be no stopping of holes and cracks for my convenience. There ought to be, though, for the comfort of the men who stay in the offices the year round. It will take none of the fat off our bones if as we go along we avail ourselves of all the little comforts which come our way. There was a lounge in the private office of one place visited. The day was as hot as a mustard plaster, and as I stripped off my coat and with utter abandon threw myself on the couch I couldn't help remarking to the yard man that that was the stuff.

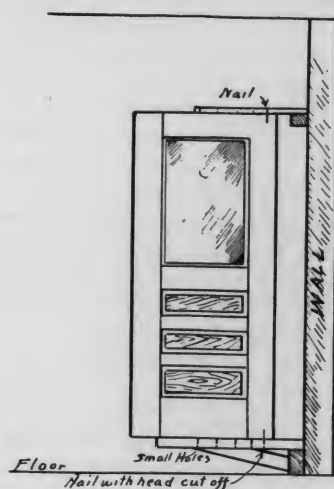
Not long ago I was in an office and there was not a chair to sit in except old-fashioned wooden bottom affairs. Don't think that I am complaining on my account. It is on account of the lumberman who is growing old, and who when he feels like sitting for a few minutes has not an easy arm chair to drop into. This yard man fired up his pipe, and to see him smoking and sitting in an old kitchen chair that didn't cost to exceed 39 cents at the bargain counter did not tally with the eternal fitness of things. A pipe of tobacco calls for an easy chair. Our great thinkers don't meditate with a pipe in their mouths when sitting on a

plank. The accompanying slivers and ache would surely shut out great thought.

There are people who say that in order to be good we must do penance; that we should go through life with, say, something like a kernel of wheat in our stocking, or a pin with which we have tried to close up a rip in our pants pricking us at every step. It does not seem to me that such philosophy is ripe. That warm spell, a couple of weeks ago, I was out among my trees, and feeling a touch of that natural tiredness which at times both attacks and afflicts me, I threw myself upon a bunch of fallen leaves that the wind had left in a pile and tried to get right down close to mother earth just like a gopher. We don't live near enough to mother earth, do you know it? We get away from it and its magnificent teachings, and become unnatural and stuck up, shriveled. It seems to me that I have gathered some of my most consoling thoughts from a contemplation of the earth. Its sermons are wiser than any man's. But as I was saying, I laid on those leaves in a condition of mental bliss. There was not a pain anywhere about me. There was a chicken pie provided for dinner. My children were at school studying so they might become presidents. My best girl was as happy as any woman well can be. The air was balmy. The leaves were rustling as if they were singing to me a lullaby. What if out from those leaves had crawled a bumblebee or wasp and given it to me? My world of bliss would have been punctured. No. I'll not take any of those things as a matter of choice. We'll get plenty of them without hunting them up. I am going to sit on a cushioned seat if I can, and the other fellow may sit on tacks if he wants to.

AN EASY WAY TO HANG DOORS.

If you were to bet your last dollar that there were not a dozen yard men in the country who hang samples of their front doors so they may easily and quickly be inspected by the customer you would retain your money and win the other fellow's. It might be safe to bet ten to one that not half that number, except in the old-fashioned way invented



"May be inspected quickly."

We know well enough that when our doors are setting around promiscuously in the storeroom they cannot be shown to either their credit or ours. Especially to ours.

If you have the space, with the desire to do so as an annex, here is a plan that will enable you at practically no expense to hang your doors so they may be inspected quickly by the man who wants to buy. The materials required are two pieces of inch boards, five or six inches long and an inch and a half or two inches wide. Bore a

by your grandfather and mine, namely, no way at all, exhibit their doors. I know only two dealers who show their doors in any but this old-style way. Nine-tenths of us can imagine that if our fancy doors were so hung that a child could swing them back and forth, thus showing both sides, with no lifting, no marring, no knocking off the legs of a customer in an endeavor to haul another door from the common pile, it would be a good thing.

quarter-inch hole through each of these, say about midway, and then securely fasten them to the wall, the top one as far above the one beneath as the door is long. Drive a headless nail into the bottom of the door, two inches from the edge, and then another nail through the hole in the upper piece into the door. You will understand it will not be necessary to drive either nail into the door so far that it cannot readily be withdrawn.

AN EYE ON THE PRICES OF OTHERS.

The question of prices is one that worries many a lumberman. To get a profit, yet not to pitch prices so high that competitors will take advantage of them, is more of a trick than a beginner might imagine. The prices at which a yard man sells have much to do with his success. He can use them as a corkscrew and worm into the good graces of the public, or he may so elevate them that they may knock him out completely. No buyer is going to stand what he calls exorbitant prices the second time if he can help himself, and he generally can. In a spasm of confidence a dealer said to me that one of the greatest mistakes he had made in business was once when he thought he had it all his own way he "tucked on the price," as he expressed it. "If I had been content to let well enough alone," he said, "I could have had one of the finest trades any man ever had, but as it was a fellow came in, cut it in two, and gave me the smaller part."

A dealer of many years' experience recently said, "I have sold lumber under a good many conditions—in a pool and out of it; with no competition nearer than ten miles, and with three competitors within that number of blocks. When it is put up between the dealers and there is a mutual list there is less anxiety, but when it is every man for himself, the devil catch the man that lags, and every buyer looking for the best bargain he can find—why, that keeps a man

thinking. I have seen the time when I would have given a man \$50 if he could have told me the prices my competitors were getting. There is nothing like getting in under the skin of your competitors in prices. We do not often pity our competitors, but I once had one that I did actually pity. I like to see a man have some chance for his life, and he had none. There was not much merchant to him. He inherited a little money and then set up bigger than life in the lumber business. All he knew about buying was to pay such prices as anybody might ask him. It was not unusual for me to buy for from \$1 to \$4 under him, and then to see him flounder around trying to do me up was both amusing and pitiable. He didn't appear to know that I had a codfish hook right in his gills all the time. Depend on good buying? I should say I do. You have said a good deal about buying lumber worth the money, and for the good of the new retailer you can't harp on that string too much. The right kind of buying is the keystone that holds the arch of success in place. I believe there are more slobber heel buyers in the lumber business than in any other line. The manufacturers try to pull the wool over their eyes. They make a combination list, put up a bold front and say, 'Nobody breaks through this list!' Why, the very fact that the list is published is ninety-nine times in a hundred proof that somebody does break through it. You know as well as I do that not once in a hundred times does a list represent minimum prices. I have seen lists when it was impossible to get under them, but it was when lumber was on the jump and everybody was taking off his hat to Old Prosperity. That doesn't come our way three times in a lifetime, though.

"In my opinion there are dealers who at times make mistakes in setting too high a price on those goods which it is generally supposed should pay a round profit. I have in mind a case of that kind. A man in this town was reorganizing the front of his house a little and wanted a door. He came in, pointed out the door he wanted, and from the readiness with which he did it I felt convinced he had seen

the same door at the other place, and I happened to know that at that place they were selling the door for \$3.75.

"What is the price of that door?" he asked.

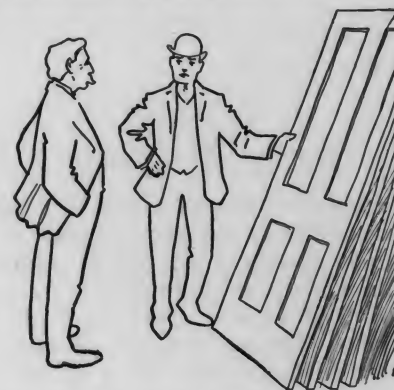
"Two and a half," I said.

"How much?" he asked, as though he hadn't understood me.

"Two and a half," I said again. Then he couldn't hold in any longer. 'Two and a half! Why, So-and-so asked me \$3.75 for that identical door.'

"Is it possible?" I said. 'Well, I would be glad to sell you all I have got for \$2.50 each.'

"Don't you see that right there in that little deal I gave my dear brother dealer a blank black eye? I set that man to



"What is the price of that door?"

thinking that my competitor wasn't in it when it came to prices. If to start with I had told him the price of the door was \$3.75 and had then dropped to \$2.50 it wouldn't have done. That wouldn't have had the right effect. What I was after was to lead the man to think that right along as a steady diet I was knocking the spots off the other dealer in prices. Now, the next time that man wanted anything in the lumber line where would he naturally go? Could you

have driven him over to the other place? Not with two clubs. Within two months he built an immense barn out on his farm, and I felt sure from the way he ordered the lumber that nobody else had had a chance at it. He drove up in front of the office, informed me what he was going to do, said he supposed I would sell him the lumber right and, on being assured that I would, said that the coming week his man on the farm would bring me in a memorandum of the lumber wanted and would begin to haul the material out. That was all the talk there was about it. His horse wasn't standing in front of my office three minutes by the watch. No doubt the door was at the bottom of this deal. And you bet he got the lumber right, too. When a man reposes that confidence in me if I didn't treat him right I would shoot myself. This little deal impressed on my mind the policy of not overcharging on any item."

POLITICS IN TRADE.

The assemblage was composed of a yard man whose mustache showed years, a salesman who could not get out of town for four hours and your humble servant. You have noticed that men will tire of talking of the same thing for any great length of time. They like to change their gait so as to rest. You have probably seen horses do this. It was a trick of Goldsmith Maid, who in her day was without a peer on the track. Suddenly she would break into a run and go like a deer until she was rested, when she would as suddenly drop back into a trot without having lost or gained a foot. She had been trained to do it and showed herself an artist.

A man cannot think consecutively for any great length of time. We sometimes hear it said of a man that he is a great thinker—that he is all the time thinking about something—and this remark leads people to believe that this man who thinks keeps at it from morning till night. He doesn't;

it isn't possible for a man to do it. A business or professional man may sit at his desk all day, but don't let it enter your mind that he is steadily thinking all the time; that is, that he is doing "heavy thinking" all day long. He thinks for a while, and then his thinking apparatus stops and rests. His mind, as it were, becomes blank for a little time. He has changed his gait, you see, and then is ready to go on again. If a man imagines that his thinker is tireless let him put it to a test. There is only one way to do this that I know of, and that is to write or dictate original matter. If



"Sawing on the old fiddle."

he does that you know his mind is not loafing, for if he does not think coherently, logically, does not choose his words well, his work is the telltale clock that denotes it. And how long do you think that even a disciplined mind can do that kind of thinking? Three hours—that is all. I don't mean dictating letters, or any such child's play as that, but turning out great thoughts which will go rumbling down the grooves of time. It is recognized in newspaper and literary circles that after a man has done exact, close, steady mental work for three hours the quality of the work will begin to

deteriorate. In other words he has done a day's work. The world at large does not understand this. Thus, when immediately following breakfast I get right down to work and quit at ten, having in the meantime thrown off 2,000 to 3,000 words of my bright stuff, and then don my society clothes and lie around all day, lolling on the porch or lawn, capering with the boys and dog, or sawing on the old fiddle, I know I have neighbors who think I am the laziest jackass that has ever kicked up his heels among them. The fact is, before they were fairly astir I had done a day's work that had drawn on my physical reserve to as great extent as would digging a ditch from 7 in the morning until 6 at night.

As said, the three of us had talked shop until we had tired of it. The yard man had told us some of his old tricks and some of his new ones. The salesman had informed us about the condition of stocks at headquarters and what he thought about the future of prices; and between them it had kept me busy listening. Of a sudden the yard man switched onto politics, and we discovered that we were three of a kind. Then the salesman had occasion to remark that in his opinion it did a man in trade no good to show his hand in either politics or religion. "Saw wood," said he, "and let the other fellows spout." He asked me if I didn't think that was the stuff. I cleared my throat and told him that I regarded it as my great American privilege to entertain any political or religious belief that I had honestly arrived at, that I didn't care who knew it, and that on the other hand I wanted others to feel no concern if I knew their belief.

"That's me," said the yard man. "I once had a partner who was a genuine mouse. It would distress him because I would go out and hurrah and carry a torch in a procession. He thought it would go against our business. I don't suppose it lost us the sale of a foot of lumber, but even if it did, when I can't sell lumber except by prostituting my convictions I'll quit and go to the almshouse, if necessary."

That expressed my views so exactly that I told the

gentlemen I would treat if they would run over into the next state with me, where we could find a public bar. I said to them it was against my principles to sneak into a drug store; that when my inner nature called for a cocktail I wanted to buy it legally, and if there were those who wanted to see it run down my throat they were as welcome



"Rattle away like a Kaffir drummer."

to do so as they were welcome to know my political and religious belief. The remark seemed to strike the high C note of the salesman's gamut. He slapped me on the shoulder and then sailed red hot into the idea of doing away with saloons. I laughed in both sleeves. He did not think it was good policy publicly to talk politics, but when it came to the saloon proposition he was as alert as a weasel and could rattle away like a Kaffir drummer. That is the unreasonable, lopsided creature the most of us are.

WHERE TO GET TRADE.

I boarded the train with a yard man who was going twenty miles my way; on the car we were so fortunate as to find another retail man, so we turned a seat and made a chatting, happy trio. The first station was a one-yard burg, of 400 souls perhaps, and the conversation led up to the subject of new yards in new towns. We especially mentioned the line yard concerns which have followed up the new railroads, putting in a yard wherever they could. "Let them put 'em in," remarked one of the yard men.

"I don't want any of them in mine."

"Nor I," said No. 2.

"Because why?" I asked, as the train fiend shook a basket of crackerjack under our noses to tempt us to buy.

"For the reason," said the first speaker, "that I had rather take my chances in a bigger town. I know it sounds all right to talk about getting into a new town, but sometimes the sound is hollow. I don't say it is not at times a good place to be. No one man has a monopoly of getting into a new town, though, and others are liable to be there as soon as you are. That is generally the trouble, it is overdone. One yard in a little new town may be all right, two don't go so well, and three are worse yet. The spurt trade in a lively new town is all right, but I have never seen the time when there were not plenty of dealers to sell the lumber for that trade. Then, no man can tell whether a new town will ever amount to a hill of beans or not. At one time somebody thought that every town in the state of Iowa would amount to something. Take it along this road, for instance. Let's see; there are nine towns worth talking about in a distance of 200 miles, and you will not find them stuck in much thicker than that on any road. At least two in three new towns are not going to amount to any great sum. So when you locate in a new town you stand one chance in three to grow up with a pretty decent town.

"Now let us look at it in another light. The dealer is a

dandy who reaches out more than six miles for trade. The most of us are brought up short by the time we have got out from three to five miles. New town or old town, it makes little difference in this respect. Of course the man in the new town, supposing there is only one yard, has the pull on the country trade surrounding him. In that respect the new-town man has the advantage of the one in the bigger town. But now, in the next heat, as we will say, seeing we have just been to the races, you will see that the new-town dealer loses ground. In these larger towns mentioned along the line you would probably find that every yard supplies about 2,000 people in town, and also does its share of business in the surrounding territory. I should say that 75 percent of the lumber sold by the dealers in these towns mentioned does not cross the city limits. A town of 2,000 people would be called a good one-yard town, wouldn't it? I do not know where the town of that size is which has not two or more yards. If a man is after a decent volume of trade he wants to pitch his tent in a good sized town. The larger the town the fewer yards in proportion to the population there are, too. No, if I expect trade I want to live where there are folks."

Just then the whistle screeched, and the yard man said it was his stopping place. No. 2 got off the train at the next station, and I was left alone with my thoughts and the dark night.

Depositing my big feet on the seat recently occupied by my traveling companions, I pulled my hat over my eyes and tried to digest the logic that had been poured into me by the yard man. As regards the volume of trade in the larger town there can be no question; but a big volume of trade is not everything. In a town of 35,000 inhabitants a yard man said to me, "It costs so like thunder to do business here!" He keeps several teams, three men in the yard, a bookkeeper, a pretty girl stenographer and a big boy who collects and runs on errands. He rents his yard, and the price must be a round one as it is on valuable ground. Then,

undoubtedly, his taxes are enough to make a man's hair stand on end. Outside of all these specified expenses the incidentals which must be met in such a business are enough to make a book. It is strive and struggle with this man—you can smell it in the atmosphere before you have been on the premises thirty minutes.

As against this yard business that in a little town of 500 people may be mentioned. This man is not doing a big trade, and to make fair money, in slang language, he doesn't have to. He owns the land on which his yard is located which is worth, possibly \$400, and his office and shed cost him say \$300 more. The interest on \$700 is not large—at the rate at which money can be had these days it would amount to less than \$50. Taxes cut no great figure. When business is at its best, or when there are cars to be unloaded, a man is hired for a few days at a time. With this exception no money goes for labor, the man and his wife doing the work. The wife puts in a few hours daily, keeping the books, and at the same time keeping her husband company so he will not get lonesome. You might object to this; you might want your wife interested head over heels in social functions, cutting a swell. That, however, is a matter of taste. This man's wife is as good as anybody's wife; she has no babies at home to take care of, and may as well be helping her husband in his business as working flowers, birds and poodle dogs in crewel at home or attending live poodle dogs. No man or woman was ever yet lowered in the estimation of sensible people by doing any work that is necessary to be done.

This man seemed so proud of the way he is getting along that he opened his books to me, and while I was reading the results his wife stood by me with a smile of satisfaction on her face. Of course it would not have been in good form for me to slap her on the back, and say, "Good for you, Maria!" but honestly I felt like doing it, and seeing they are young people, and that years are beginning to ripen my raven locks by turning them blonde, I took the liberty to

say to them that they were getting along first rate. And then we went up to the house and had one of the nicest suppers you ever saw—potatoes in cream, toast, iced tea, tomatoes, canned salmon on dishes that shone and on linen that was whiter than my shirt front. After supper the yard man and his wife, accompanied by the organ, sang some good old hymns, and I felt so happy that I fell in to help them along, and made about the worst discord you ever listened to. They said it had done them good—my coming—and I



"I walked down the street between them."

told them it had done me good. When it came train time they went to see me off, and as in a fatherly way I walked down the street between them the loungers out in front of the stores stared as though I might be a superannuated preacher who was being showed the town by some of his old flock.

This yard man does not owe a cent on his stock, he discounts every bill and is clearing a nice amount yearly. In a few years, if he keeps on at this rate, he will be well fixed—that is, for his town. He could not go into Chicago and

support a marble front on the boulevard and pay \$100 each for his wife's dresses—and let us right here in concert thank the Lord that we are not obliged to do these things. And over and above all, this yard man is evidently happy; and happiness is the ultimatum of life. No matter how much money we may scrape together, or how many positions of alleged honor we may fill, if happiness is lacking in reality we are as a stork in a desert, with the sand drifting into our eyes, and gasping for a breath of fresh air.

As the train was whirling along in the moonlight past the big cornfields, I thought of these two cases—the yard man in the big town and the other in the little town. They are of course extremes, but to arrive at a mean it is always necessary to consider extremes. If at that moment I could have stepped into the shoes of the yard man in the big town, with his large expense account, with the hottest kind of competition beating him hither and thither, not really knowing from one month to another where he is; or into the shoes of the man in the little burg who is doing a safe and profitable business, and who is doing it with so little friction that the scowl does not come to his brow, nor the seams to his forehead, I felt as the drummer asked me if that seat was engaged and slid in by my side that I would ask the little town man to take off his shoes that I might put them on.

When the town of my destination had been called, the old bus had trundled me to the hotel and I had crept into my little bed this thought of big and little town dealers still held the fort. Then, as the stars twinkled through the open window, it seemed all right after all. There are those who prefer large towns in which to do business, and they can have them; others prefer small towns, and they can follow their bent. What if all preferred large towns, or small ones? The lumber business would be so unbalanced that in great sections there would be a scarcity of building material and in others a surplus. There would be so many yards in every town of much size that all of them would be on the ragged edge. This variety of taste is a saving grace.

Some powerful, unseen hand has fixed the thing better than all of us combined could fix it in a million years. When we spread a piece of bread with butter we want it done evenly. It does not answer to have all the butter in a lump on one side of the bread. It seems to me that this great hand has spread humanity over the face of the earth as we would have the butter spread on our bread. Every pore is filled. In the lumber world there are the logger, manufacturer, wholesale man and retail man, one nearly balancing the other.

As sleep was sealing my eyelids, as the poet so beautifully puts it, are you of the opinion that my last thought was of this great and wise plan which so redounds to the benefit of us all? Not a bit of it. My last conscious thought was that I hoped the hotel man would set up a tender steak and good cup of coffee for breakfast. So long as we are earthy it is impossible for us to get away from the earth; and I think not many of us want to.

THINGS WHICH EXASPERATE MUST BE EXPECTED.

Like the gentleman that he is, the yard man went at it like a hired man to show and tell me everything he could. We went into the yard and talked about this and that, but there seemed to be no handle to get hold of. If all the yard men conducted their business exactly alike my occupation would be gone and I should have to go to work for a living. I could discover nothing worth talking about around these premises. It was simply a nicely kept yard, with no emphasized features.

If I had gone away from this yard and seen nothing I thought was worth mentioning the yard man might have felt hurt. He might have said, "Darn him, he came here to see me; I showed him all I had, and then he didn't say a word about it!" Moreover, he treated me as well as one

fellow can treat another. He sent his man over to the store to get some cigars, and told him to get "good ones," too. Then he insisted that I should not pay for my dinner at the hotel. He said it would be a great idea for me to come twenty-five miles to see him, and then pay for my grub! "You wouldn't let me do that, would you?" he asked, and of course I told him no and that settled it. He hailed



"He hailed the 'bus man.'"

the 'busman and told him to call right at his office for me. You can't help liking such a man. If he will come and see me he shall have the softest bed in the house if I have to sleep with my dog under the front steps and help to watch burglars.

The cold fact is there is nothing of public interest that can be said about many of the yard men and their yards. Don't you know that there are no knobs on some men? The other day I had a chat of two hours with an old yard man who is having a good trade, has got rich, yet the point of

my little 2-cent pencil was not worn off to an infinitesimal degree writing down a thing he said. He is not to blame for it, either. He didn't happen to let out what was wanted—and I couldn't drag it out of him. Sometimes I visit all the yards in a town and go away as empty as I came, and no record is made thereof. I am not complaining, for these things are, and whatever is can't be helped. Almost as by accident I ran into a lumber office not long ago and the occupant of it kept me hustling mentally, arranging and remembering the good things he said. There were knobs all over him. In less than thirty minutes he had said a dozen things that I was convinced would be of interest to 50,000 readers. You see I had struck a "good hole," as we used to say when as boys we went a-fishing.

This yard man had pulled open all the big faucets, and then toward the last he incidentally opened a little one, as he supposed, yet in my opinion, it was the biggest of them all.

"Some dealers," said he, "will sell a bill to a contractor, expecting that everything will go without friction. There will be no extra carting, no dissatisfaction, no knock off on this or that, they think, and they make their figures accordingly. To start with, you would think they were going to shoot chutes that were thoroughly oiled and the lower end of which would be easily reached by gravity. Then actual trade life is experienced and the moonshine fades away. The contractor becomes a little unreasonable in some things perhaps, and the lumberman loses his good temper. The end is hard feelings, and possibly an open break. Now herein is where I blame the lumberman: He goes at the business as though he were a dreamer. He ought to anticipate the annoyances and when they come meet them philosophically. I have a house bill on hand now. At first it was the intention to cover with the ordinary width clapboards, but the other morning the contractor came in and said the builder had changed his plans and wanted to cover with narrow stuff. The clapboards were already on the ground and to

cart them back was work and some risk, for if you can cart clapboards all around the country without now and then damaging a board I have not yet found it out. I might have gone and hired a hall and delivered a lecture on 'People Who Don't Know What They Want!' What good would it have done? Wouldn't it have done harm? The contractor was no more to blame than I was. I told him we had got to accommodate our friends, and the narrow stuff went over and the other came back.

"Have you ever successfully done many jobs which didn't take more work than you thought they would when you started in? That is the basis we should all start out on. Lay out for the extra work and tribulations beforehand, and then if they don't come we can count ourselves so much ahead."

I felt like saying, "Old man, your head is plumb there," but instead I tumbled into the old 'bus after the driver had held the door open fully three minutes for me, to meet the cold gaze of a woman in spectacles who no doubt thought I was as slow as syrup in January.

A LABOR SAVER.

The day has gone by when it is any credit to a man to want to lift his liver out. Some of our forefathers defined work as severe physical effort, and they thought that any man who did not indulge in this particular kind of effort was a sort of dewdrop that the sun of prosperity ought to dissipate. The great majority of farmers were of this opinion, but the world is moving all the time. The farmers these days, in this section of the country, are no more anxious to strain their muscles than are the rest of us. They want machinery to do the hard work. In labor saving appliances the agricultural world is rich. The farmer can ride the plow, cultivator, mower and harvester. He can load his hay by machinery, and horse power elevates it to the

stack or into the barn. For one I am glad to see this. The coming generations of farmers will be better preserved than their ancestors were. Their knuckles will be less prominent and their shoulders will be less stooped. They will feel themselves better men, for it is only when we are in harmony with nature that we are fully aware of our high estate. When our bodies or minds are out of shape we feel our belittlement. If any man thinks it is a credit to him to lift and tug until the human form divine is misshapen, or to mold his mind into that shape dictated by this or that creed or party until he can see only in that one direction he is making a huge mistake. The march of the soul of man



"The farmer can ride the plow."

is ever onward, and the more in that onward course it branches off into the paths of error the more ground it will have to retrace. I saw a thousand men in a penitentiary, and the thought that came to me was that all these men were retracing their steps; they had got into the byway, and must get back on to the great highway that leads toward the brilliant sun of perfection. And do not let us dope our souls with the thought, beloved, that the steps retraced are those of the convict only. The laws of the Almighty do not recognize the name of convict. The man, convict or not, who violates them will be gone after as with a red-hot poker.

I want all of us to preserve our youth. Personally I feel so elastic this morning it would be a treat to go out and chase bumblebees. Let's aim to live in concert in this regard,

and if we do so, we must not do violence to that wonderful house in which we live. The ultimatum to be reached in this world is happiness, and health is one of the component parts of happiness. In our abnormal moments we think that money or power is the great object in life, but we are thinking wild. There is no millionaire in this country or out of it, no ruler of any government, who today is getting so much out of life as is that little four-year-old, barefoot boy out there in front of my house whose very existence is so perfect that it is a poem. By and by that perfect little poem will become a jagged piece of common prose. That beautiful naturalness that becomes him so well will have disappeared. He will imbibe the caste idea of society and will be one who will be looked down upon or who will look down upon others. He will absorb absurd religious notions. In business he will pitch in with the idea of doing up somebody. If he is made of fine material he will feel ashamed of himself every twenty-four hours of his life. If he becomes rich he will find it will not add to his happiness, and if he is elected state senator or appointed postmaster it will fill no aching void in his breast. He will decide that the goal is happiness, and that only a natural life and honest purpose can bring it. If we are capable of analyzing we find out these things as years come to us.

I saw a yard man putting some heavy timbers in his shed. He tugged and wiggled until his face was red as a beet, and the perspiration dropped from his nose. His man was struggling with him. Then I thought of a little appliance I saw in a Wisconsin yard—simply a wooden roller, maybe 2½ inches in diameter and 15 inches long. You will understand it from the accompanying diagram.

The bottom of the appliance is a plank, say eight inches wide, with spikes in it, so that when it is set down it will stay. Now we will say you are piling timber in your shed. To start with you can lay a plank down for a road bed, put down not far from the end nearest you one of these little giant rollers, start your timber on it, about midway put

down another roller and shove the timber where it is wanted. The next time you place the rollers on the stick of timber already in place and shove in timber No. 2. Keep operating like this and the first you will know all your timber will



be stored. You can wear your meeting shirt and do this kind of work. When loading timber you can use these rollers to advantage.

You are under no obligations to pay any attention to the dimensions here given. You can arrange those to fit the case. One lumberman told me he thought he would have longer rollers of this kind arranged in front of the bins of his shed so as to run the lumber over them when loading on the wagon. Now this is all simple enough, and possibly you may have thought it out yourself, but the point is, you don't adopt it. One drawback is that the cost is so small. If an agent who could talk like greased lightning should come along with some appliance that would do the work of these rollers and want about \$10 for it I expect that some of you would bite.

It won't do to let the farmer, with his facilities for avoiding manual labor get ahead of us. Our muscle is as precious as his.

SELLING FOR CASH.

It is generally thought that the ideal way of selling goods is for cash, but as there are people who disagree with everybody else so there are tradesmen who regard the cash business man as a chump. A pioneer yard man said he would have felt downhearted if on coming west he had been obliged to sell for cash.

"Why," said he, "by selling on time I could get all sorts of profits. Then I gave all sorts of time, and got from 18 to 24 percent for the accommodation. Thirty percent on lumber and 20 percent interest, bringing me 50 percent a year on my money, wasn't bad as I looked at it. Of course if it ran more than a year the profit was less."

Such a method, however, implies that a man has plenty of money to operate with. In other lines I have known merchants who claimed that a credit business was the moneymaker; that time payments would warrant higher prices and a larger volume of sales. As said, however, the most of us would like to do business on a cash basis. When we exchange a day's work, a load of corn, a horse, or a thousand feet of lumber for money we want the money when the goods are delivered. There is sound commercial sense in that, though were it carried out to the letter I don't know where the immense army of bookkeepers would look for a living, and possibly some of us, if we could go to bed and sleep instead of worrying over our credits, would live to such an age that we would become nuisances.

"I notice that an Illinois dealer writes that he is selling lumber for cash," said a yard man. "If I did not have faith that the truth, and nothing but the truth, abides in my fellow dealers I should think it was a fairy tale. It is past my comprehension how any man can sell lumber for cash. And when I say cash I mean cash—spot cash—no halfway business about it. I know that in some lines ten or thirty days is called cash, but if I should say that I sell lumber for cash from my retail yard I should mean that I had the money in hand before the lumber left my possession. That, in a retail business, is what cash means. I am glad if the Illinois dealer can sell his stuff for cash, but I would bet \$1,000 that I couldn't do it without knocking my trade galley west."

Then he actually warmed up to the subject. "If I were building a house and a lumber dealer should insist that I pay in advance for every load of lumber and every item

that left his yard I'll be blown if I would buy it of him at all. Last week my wife was sick, and the doctor was there nearly every day. Suppose that he insisted that he be paid every time before he went away? Suppose when he was going to send up some medicine by one of the children he should tell me to send down a quarter or half dollar before it would come? Remember, I am talking about myself; I am perfectly able to pay a doctor's bill, and when discussing this cash lumber business it is supposed that we are talking



"In a crowd by the diamond."

about men who are both able and willing to pay for all the lumber they may order. No, it won't do. Look out that we put our lumber where we will get our pay for it, and then decently treat the men who buy it."

In a crowd by the diamond, watching the whirling and batting of the sphere, I met one of the most prominent dealers in the west. When there was a lull I asked this dealer what he thought about selling lumber for cash and, resting one foot on a carriage pole, he said it would be a fine thing if it could be done. Offhand I should guess that this man

carries a stock worth \$20,000, and he says that his outstanding accounts equal the value of his stock on hand.

"I insist on monthly settlements," said he. "I get as near cash as that. I once started in with \$6,000 and sold \$65,000 worth of lumber in the year, and to do that it must be necessary for a man to look out for short credits. I do not see how I could do a cash business. A large share of my town orders come by telephone, and I couldn't hold them and send out and collect in advance. In a new country, where lumber is hauled a long distance, where people are strangers and everybody is expected to pay for what he gets, I can understand how lumber may be sold for cash."

"Don't believe it can be done," laconically said a dealer. Then he went to talking about the pacer Fitzsimmons, that we had just seen in a race, as though it would be a waste of breath to discuss the selling for cash proposition.

"I doubt the practicability of it," said another dealer. "How near a man would come to it would depend on his individuality and the character of his trade. My uncle"—naming a leading yard man—"insists on settlements every six months, and on such a basis the accounts would average three months old. That I call good. Talking about cash, we will take a house bill, for instance. A certain amount of dimension goes out, and a portion of it may come back. Shingles are taken to the job two or three times, maybe, and finally some of them are returned. I can hardly see how you are going to make it a cash deal. If a dealer says to a builder that he would require a payment when, say, half of the material is delivered, that is sensible and all right, but at the same time that is a long way from the cash proposition."

"Not under the present conditions," said a line yard manager. "One of our yards is practically selling for cash, by offering a discount of \$2 a thousand as an inducement. There will come a time, I think, when it will be possible to sell for nearly cash. But when that time comes trade will be conducted differently from what it is now. I look for

yards carrying stocks worth \$25,000 to take the places of the many small ones we have now. If that time shall come, with the right kind of understanding locally between the dealers it would be possible to sell practically for cash. When that time arrives lumber will not go out in dribblets as it does now to a job."

I could quote a dozen more opinions on the subject, but it would be filling space for naught, as really they would cover the ground already gone over. I should feel safe to guarantee that a thorough canvass of the country would not disclose a half dozen dealers who would say that it is practicable to sell lumber for strictly cash. A dealer put a good deal of meat into the statement: "I shouldn't expect a man who is building a house to stand around my office all the time with his weazle drawn simply to accommodate my notion as to terms of payment."

HANDLING HARDWARE.

The yard man said that when he was doing business in Kansas he sold hardware in connection with lumber, and that he went into it as a defensive measure, namely, for the purpose of getting even with the regular hardware dealers who insisted on selling screen doors and windows and building paper, and furthermore that the scheme carried. "And I believe in the same way we could stop them from sucking eggs here!" he remarked, speaking of the town in which he is now doing business.

"How did you like the hardware deal?" he was asked.

Then he stated his objections to it. He said to start with it took extra help when hardware was handled. A man may be out in the yard, busy selling a bill, somebody will want a pound or two of nails, and if it is your business to sell nails you must weigh out that pound or two with all the promptness that you would go out to throw a barrel of lime into a customer's wagon. Then no tasty bookkeeper

wants to transfer the smut of the nails to his books. Nails were sold as leaders, but other articles paid well.

As you have observed, this man's chief objection to handling hardware is that extra help is required. Ordinarily I don't know about that. Take a yard in which, say, two men are employed, one outside to attend to the piling, loading and slicking up, and the other on the inside to look after the customers and books, and I think that the inside man could squeeze out time to wait on the hardware cus-



"A girl typewriter."

tomers. Yard men put in a heap of time with their heels cocked on the table, don't you know they do?

When it comes to the yard that is operated by one man power we may look at it in another light. I saw a man who sold lumber, coal, paint, agricultural implements, bought hogs and corn, and if there was a blessed soul around the place except himself I did not become aware of it. He would run from a load of hogs to a load of corn, and back into the office when he heard the telephone dingling. I was there two hours and I talked with him two minutes. He said he got time to read this yard literature on Sunday,

but just at that time he was so busy he couldn't talk with his grandmother. I don't know why he should take me for his grandmother, but that is what he said.

I cannot find it in my heart to shout long and loud for the one man power in the lumber yard. When one man must pile the lumber, sell it, keep the books and do all the smoking his hands are more than full. Of course there are yards in little burgs which can be cared for by one man, and even then that man can take a nap after dinner, but we will leave this class of yards out of the calculation.

There is here and there a man who imagines he is just old lightning, and boasts how much business he does all alone. Recently I was in the office of one of these men. He was showing his lumber to a farmer, and from the time he was in the yard I should think he showed him all he had. Two men stuck their heads in at the office door while I was holding down the old wooden bottom chair, and not seeing the boss went on. Maybe they didn't want a thing and maybe they did. I am not in the field to force my opinions upon you, but to tell you the opinions of your brother dealers and how they are getting along; but on this one occasion I am moved to say that it is an excellent thing to have somebody around a business place to see what is wanted. In an office in which I recently called the only visible human being was a girl typewriter—a pretty typewriter of course; that is what the newspapers always say. I didn't care because this girl typewriter was holding down the office. I tipped my 75-cent hat to her, and then we went to talking about the merits of the different writing machines. Just as I was telling her that I used a Blickensderfer—a Dutch machine—and that often my words were not correctly spelled for the reason that the blamed Dutch thing had not yet learned the English language, the yard man came in. The girl was laughing at what I said about my machine, and when her employer suddenly made his appearance through the back door she went to blushing, for no reason so far as I know but that she was laughing.

Under those circumstances I had to introduce myself to the head of the house. Even innocence will sometimes give a fellow a rap. I hope this will fully explain matters to that yard man.

Last winter I spent three or four hours in a lumber office in which hardware is sold and saw the way it is done there. Once the bookkeeper waited on a customer who wanted nails, and with an eagle claw-shaped instrument he pulled the nails out of the keg into the scales scoop, and did not handle them except to throw a few back which were not wanted. Then he brushed his hands together, charged the nails on the day book and went back to his ledger. Therein comes a part of the fun—to sell two pounds of nails and charge them. When the bookkeeper was out a carpenter came in and wanted a set of rollers for a barn door. The young lady who was doing some kind of office work in the place adjusted her hair, tripped around behind the counter as though she was walking on eggs, and waited for the carpenter to tell her where the rollers were. Then she bundled them up, using four times as much paper and string as she ought to, and tripped back behind the glass partition. The yard man said that his hardware paid a handsome profit.

Whether a yard man sells hardware in connection with his lumber or not largely depends on his taste and his environments. If there is a good understanding between the lumber and hardware trades the lumberman has no desire to dip into hardware. Probably nine-tenths of the retail lumbermen sell coal, yet I heard a yard man express himself the other day that he wouldn't "be bothered with the blank stuff!" If a retail man can sell lumber and coal and make a success of it I am of the opinion that he can sell hardware, provided he wants to.

STEADY PRICES WANTED.

A yard man poised his penholder between his fingers and said he did not know whether to order a car of yellow pine flooring or not. He had no faith in the stability of prices. They had been away up; now they had come down part way, and he did not know but in two weeks he would be able to buy cheaper than he could then.

If you will permit me to speak in the language of the classics, there apparently has been more monkeying with prices than suits the yard men. I hear nothing in trade



"I was in his billiard room."

circles oftener than that. The yard men are very much at sea. They do not know whether they are skating on their ears or, in trying to keep on their feet, are running their shoes down at the heels.

Maybe at this juncture some of you unsympathizing autocrats in the wholesale branch of the business will speak up and say, "That is the way with them always. They want prices lower than a driven well!" If you say that I am going to say back that you do not know the retail men of

the country. They are not praying for low prices—they want steady prices. Not those which will go up and shake hands with the king of Mars today and go down to the other end of the gamut tomorrow. Ask them when they come into your office to buy if this is not what they want; and if they say it is not you may give me the best cigar in your case the next time we meet.

The great merchant does not want steady prices. Such prices give him no opportunity to make his foresight pay him. Such prices would keep him on the level with other mortals. The great merchant lays hold of the future, dissects and analyzes it. The problem of cost and production, supply and demand are ever before him. He sees away on ahead and buys accordingly. A friend of mine in the mercantile business discovered that a line of goods was selling below the point of cost of production. Maybe they were put out as a leader, maybe to knock some other fellow off the track—this merchant didn't care why they were so selling. He took all of his own ready money, borrowed more, rented warehouses and bought and stored. His wife came near having the hysterics. She could see about an inch from her nose and thought that her husband was going head to on a rock that would lay their craft open from bow to stern. Woman is an intuitive creature; she is an angel by the side of us fellows who have to shave, but when it comes to reasoning out great financial problems she was not born for it. She was born for greater things than that.

While this man was waiting for a rise I was in his billiard room one evening. He stepped around the table as spry as a steel trap and as gay as a meadow lark. Three times in as many hours he went into the basement, came up and pulled a cork. He was enthusiastic; and in passing let me say I like to associate with men of such enthusiasm. He felt, as we say in polite society, that he had the world by the caudal appendage. He waited patiently for a few months and the value of the goods in which he had invested began to seek its level. This is a good thing for us to bear

in mind always—that sooner or later values of all things—goods, character, effort—seek their level. You can neither keep them up with balloons nor down by tying millstones to their necks. Up, up the price went, and when it had reached a point to suit the merchant he let go. "I cleaned up \$90,000," he said to me. That man was betting on a sure thing, speculator though he ordinarily would be called. If he had not kept an eye on the cost of production he never could have taken the advantage of the market he did.

All the yard men, however, are not capable merchants. You, and you and you are, but some of the fellows over in the next county are not. Possibly over in the next county there are not more than two or three who can read the future of events and plan accordingly. Therefore, what is it that the most of them want? Why, steady prices.

HOW YOUR CUSTOMERS GRADE.

The yard man was wideawake in more directions than one. Very likely there is not one in a hundred of us who studies all the phases of the business. I have yet to find a man who, in my opinion, is complete master of his calling. They know a great deal about it, many of them, but talk with them for twenty-five minutes, take a look around the premises, and it is discovered there is some cog slipping. Which is not saying a thing against a man of you, for how can we expect to be perfect in this world of imperfections? We don't want to get perfect, fly away and leave our friends desolate, especially those we owe, do we?

The retail lumberman wanted to know more about the people with whom he had to deal, so he got up a rating book of his own. I can't tell you what this man's name is, nor where he lives, for it would not only be letting the cat out of the bag but a whole litter of little kittens with her. This rating book making was conducted perfectly *sub rosa*,

for were it known the result might be law suits and possibly broken heads. This yard man has his rating book printed, and so far as the methods of obtaining information are concerned it may be said the ratings are the consensus of the stories told by the account books of several of the leading business houses of the town.

I sat down with this yard man and he pointed out some things in connection with his book which were exceedingly interesting. For instance, there are whole families which seem to have been born culls. Take them right down from grandfather to grandson, the whole lot is no good as customers. A process of law cannot squeeze a cent out of them; and voluntarily they pay nothing. Then there are families



"I sat down with this yard man."

which are all right down the line, thrifty and honorable. This yard man says as a purchaser treats one tradesman in town so he will treat the others. If he is slow with you he is slow with all, and if he pays you promptly he pays others promptly. The conclusion reached in this matter seems once more to emphasize the old saying that it is impossible to make a whistle out of a pig's tail. I am inclined to think that those traits of character which are born in us we will retain through life; that we can hardly shake them

more than we can shake the physical peculiarities and characteristics which we inherited.

This yard man gave me one of these books that I might draw some conclusions from it, and an analysis shows some features which may be new to some of us.

We will say that the figures representing the ratings are 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. One stands for collectible and prompt pay; 2 for collectible and slow pay; 3 for prompt pay; 4 for a risk; 5 for as near a dead beat as you can put a finger on it. You are acquainted with all these classes—the man who has property and who is also a man; the man who has property, yet who staves off the paying of a debt as long as he can and who, if he did not have property that could be reached, would be a dead beat; the man who really belongs to the salt of the earth insomuch that the payment of a bill is a matter of honor with him; the man to whom you sell half thinking you will never receive pay for your goods; and finally the man who if he gets your goods in his hands you know those goods are lost to you.

Take the town in which you sell lumber, with its vicinity, and how is the population divided as to these various classes? This is the point I have been trying to figure out. There were fractions which stuck themselves in the way but these were fired out of the window bodily. The yard man, who has probably given more thought to this subject than you and I together, is of the opinion that the town in which he resides is a typical one. It was originally settled by eastern people, and during the years which have followed Dutchmen, Danes and others from foreign shores, who know a good thing when they see it, have bought much of the surrounding farm lands and are getting rich; which makes about a typical prairie state town. In this list there are something less than 2,500 names, and when the percentages are cast with reference to the rating figures the result shows as follows:

30 percent 1—collectible and prompt pay.
19 percent 2—collectible and slow pay.

19 percent 3—prompt pay, but not collectible.
 18 percent 4—risk.
 14 percent 5—n. g. or culls.

The people represented by the 30 percent are gilt-edge customers; the next 19 percent are all right, provided that life is not too short to wait for them; the following 19 percent will pay as promptly as will the first 30, should there be no ill fortune in the shape of enforced idleness, sickness or death to prevent; the next 18 percent you sell at your risk; and the final 14 percent will beat you at every turn. You have before now been introduced to all these kinds of people, and possibly you may not be thankful for a reintroduction to those who are rated as five.

It occurred to me that it might be an item of interest to divide the men and women of the list and see how they compare in relation to debt paying. We lords of creation make the following showing:

30 percent 1—collectible and prompt pay.
 18 percent 2—collectible and slow pay.
 19 percent 3—prompt pay, but not collectible.
 19 percent 4—risk.
 14 percent 5—culls.

On the list there are the names of more than 200 women and, as they usually do, they shine as planets, while we fellows who are so proud to have it known that we wear pants made from imported cassimere glimmer as third-class stars. Here is the women's record:

37 percent 1—collectible and prompt pay.
 13 percent 2—collectible and slow pay.
 27 percent 3—prompt pay, but not collectible.
 10 percent 4—risk.
 13 percent 5—no good, from a financial point of course.

The most of those composing the 37 percent are widows, and to read between the lines we must reach the conclusion that having been left in comfortable circumstances they are more prompt to pay their debts than their departed husbands were. If this were not so the percentage of 1 would be lowered and that of 2 made larger, as it is in the case of the men.

Then observe the number of women who pay their debts when legally not a cent can be collected from them. I called my best girl's attention to this fact, and she calmly replied: "Why, of course!" In the risky class there are two men to one woman, but when it comes to worthless culls I am sorry to say that the sexes run about neck and neck, with 1 percent in favor of the women. But, Lord bless them, they lead us so far in other respects it seems mean to mention this latter fact.

DEFECTS IN A COAL HOUSE.

The yard man said he built a coal house from a plan published in these columns. In this house the floor sloped to the front, and the builder of it said it was a capital idea, but he had run against a snag. At the same time, he said, he ought to have had sense to guard against it; but he wanted to tell of it so that other dealers might have clear sailing. I slapped him on the back and told him he was an ideal man, a scholar and a philanthropist. If every yard man would do that—make his co-laborers acquainted with the means by which he succeeded or failed—there would be less groping in the dark than there is. If you all would speak right out in meetin', tell what you know and what you don't know, the selling of lumber at retail would be reduced to a science in twelve months. You think that a publisher can make a good lumber paper without your assistance, but it is impossible. You are his right-hand man. I should like to see the result if you would turn yourself loose once. When talking with a yard man about this the other day he said, "I suppose we do know a good many points about selling lumber, but we are not writers." Writers to the dogs! Do you know that the best writers in the world are those people who have something to tell and tell

it in a way that others can understand it? That is the only secret about it."

"It is wrong," this yard man who had built a coal house explained, "to provide the usual foundation for a coal house of this kind, for the reason that the weight is not evenly distributed, it being much greater in front than in the rear. The center of gravity is by no means in the center of the building. Then the house should be effectually braced in-



"Make his co-laborers acquainted."

side. The coal pushing down in front bulged the wall, and I had to put iron rods inside from back to front to hold it in place. Those are the mistakes that a man would naturally make, but when a building is put up as it ought to be it is the boss."

APPROACHING DULLNESS.

It is not expected the average yard man will have much to do during the winter months. In large cities the building season is the year round—that is, it never actually comes to a standstill—but in your little burg a man who would start to build a house in the winter would be branded a lower grade of lunatic. In these small towns

there are men without number who will argue that the proper way to build a house is to put in the foundation walls in the fall and let them settle through the winter, or "ripen," as a man said to me. And that very man appeared to be a good deal of a fellow on general principles, too. There is no accounting for the way people will get to thinking. Smart men have these little wormholes in them.

The time of year will come when, as a rule, the yard man in the small town may sit down and foot up his sales for the year. He will do something after this date, sell a little inside finish for jobs that are under way, and dribble now and then to a farmer who is backward in patching up around his premises, but the aggregate of his sales will be small. A dealer told me just as last winter had fairly begun that he might as well put the cork right in then.

It seems to me if I were running a lumber yard I would sell coal if only for the moral effect, namely, to keep me from becoming any lazier than I am at present. A country lumber office in the winter, where there is no coal being peddled out, in matter of quietness and silence comes next to the cemetery. There is no other business place in a town that can match it. Last winter I sat in an office four straight hours, and not a soul opened the front door. There was the advantage that there was time for a good talk, but we talked out—that is, in the lumber line. We ran along like two old women on the gossip of the country, but that hardly counts. There is a sight of difference in the way lumbermen will talk. With some there is a sudden gush, and they are done. They think they have told all they know. Others will steadily bubble along like a spring. Then there are those who are intermittent. They have their say, and then having got their second wind they will break out again.

Gathering retail lumber news is like fishing. It is never known what luck is ahead. Often I have started out expecting to catch a whale and not got even a minnow. I have tramped until my boots leaked and got so little worth

writing about that I expected my discharge by return mail. Then again when I had hoped to catch a fish just about big enough to fry, up would come a whale. Last fall I ran against a whale. He did not belong in the office in which I was calling, but dropped down as from the sky. He sauntered in, sat on the table, swung his feet and poured out the stuff as fast as I wanted to take care of it. I never use a note book, having decided years ago that if the machinery up in my think tank couldn't stow away facts and figures and hand them out when I wanted them I would have it rebushed. Few men have ever taxed that machinery as



"Started out expecting to catch a whale."

this whale did. He had been in every line of the lumber business, could talk like greased lightning and every sentence contained meat. He rattled off figures, opinions, prices, names, and he would have found a close listener until midnight if he had kept on. I should like to meet a fellow of that kind that would tire me out. He said, though, he was going to Omaha, and broke away. I suppose that for the next several years I will occasionally draw on something that man told me. That is the way I get at the stuff up in the reservoir. I pull the spigot, and if it doesn't tap quite right by falling into the proper place I send it back to

lie in storage for a while longer. I say, "You blamed idea, I can get along without you, and you can't show your head here unless you do it in a proper way."

In one office in the dull season a friend of the yard man had dropped in and they were having a game of euchre. An invitation to join was immediately issued, but I told them I had never in my life run up against any game of cards, even for fun, except poker, and since I had children



"A country lumber office in winter."

to preach morality to I had quit even that, furthermore, that in order to support a family it was necessary to have some money. And right here I remember the remarks of an Ohio yard man on the subject of games in the lumber office. He said he would not have one of them played on his premises; not even quoits in the yard. No cards, no checkers, no anything. He didn't have it in for any of these games, but the idea was that if you or I should drop into his place he would not want it to have the appearance of a fourth-class saloon with a lot of fellows sitting around playing for drinks and spitting on the floor. From a high business point of view I think he was right.

It is not necessary, however, for a small town dealer

to hibernate during the winter months. The best of them will of course read the current lumber literature. A yard man told me that he would want a lumber paper when business opened the next spring! What would you do with such a man? Hitch weights to his ears and stretch them out a couple of feet long so he would pass for what he is worth, or what? In the winter a yard man ought to be sticking a pin into every condition and indication he can learn. If I expected to buy lumber to sell at retail next year I should look out for the figures representing the stocks on hand at the end of the shipping season, and then keep posted on the demand during the winter; keep an eye on the logging operations, and thus try to know a thing or two when spring rolled around. The lumber barons can't fool us much if we only keep our eyes open.

LENDING LUMBER.

You have no doubt been asked to loan your lumber and dimension piles. The retail lumberman is regarded as an accommodating mortal and on occasions like fairs, festivals and the like his lumber may as well be pressed into service as not. It's only boards that he deals in, and it doesn't hurt those boards to be made into booths, tables and seats. At any rate that is the way the public is inclined to think. The yard man thinks differently; still, first and last he lends a great deal of lumber for the purpose of keeping peace in the family. The great buying family is very touchy over some matters, and we do not succeed in pleasing it any too well if we try our best.

"Two years ago," said the yard man, "I believe I was as provoked over the little matter of lending lumber as I have been for many years. At the fair our church people wanted to run an eating stand, and it was natural enough for them to come to me to borrow the lumber with which to build. Would I deliver it? Of course I would, for I

delivered lumber for everybody, so I took them over the amount of lumber a carpenter said they wanted. It rained on the afternoon of the last day of the fair, and the next morning when I went over to get the stuff I saw a tough looking lot of lumber. Of course the roof boards were thoroughly wet. They had made a floor of a portion of the boards and this was covered with mud. The tables were besmeared with coffee, pie and other eatables. I gathered the lumber up and was half inclined to make a bonfire of it. Got nothing for the use of it? No, not even a thank you."

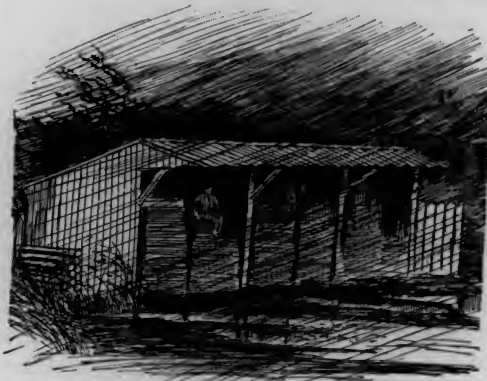
"On what basis do you lend lumber?" a yard man was asked who was loading boards for some fakirs on the fair ground.

"Only on one basis—cash down," was the reply. "I don't care who it is who wants to borrow lumber; he pays for it before it goes out of the yard. Then I am in a position to adjust my claims when it is returned. Now I don't care how many nail holes and cracks are in these boards when these fellows are through with them, I will buy them back for just what they are worth to me. Then if they forget to return them I don't care the snap of my finger."

"I do not like to lend lumber but sometimes I do," said another dealer. "I draw the line, however. When it is to go inside for seats or tables I let it go and take the chances, but when it is to be used outdoors and is liable to be caught out in the rain the people who get it must be customers, and then it is understood that they must pay for any damage, and you cannot think of many uses to which lumber can be put and not be damaged. Often when people borrow lumber they think that a few nail holes in it will do no harm, but these same people would not want to buy it at full prices with those holes in it. You see it makes a difference who is paying the bill."

OPEN AND CLOSED SHEDS.

"Why on earth should I build an open shed?" the yard man asked, in a manner that bespoke disgust that anybody should prefer such a shed. "When I have a shed I want it to fill the bill—not half shed and half open to the weather. Tell me how you are to keep the lumber in an open shed dry in a driving rainstorm? And how does it work when there comes a rip-roaring old blizzard of a snowstorm? Why, I have seen an open shed literally packed



"In a driving rainstorm."

with snow, and then it is such a nice job to clean it out, or wait for it to melt! I have seen sheds that to load lumber from, when the snow was melting from the roofs, was like being out in a hard rainstorm. Of course such sheds can be built with hoods, but not all of them are built that way. No, sir; I want none of it in mine."

It was less than a week after listening to the above comments that the other side of the story was offered. The advocate of the open shed said that men might talk and talk in

favor of the closed shed, but the fact remained that lumber would come out better from the one that is open.

No doubt this disagreement will continue. I must say this, however: The closed shed men as a body talk as though they were very sure of their footing. They appear to be convinced that they are a step in advance of their brethren who are using open sheds, and I do not remember having met a dealer who said he would willingly go from his closed shed to an open one, while on the other hand I have heard dealers who use open sheds assert that they would like one that was closed. "I don't think they are to be mentioned together in the same day," was the way one dealer who has close-shedded in everything laconically disposed of the question.

Then there is the other type of shed—the one which has large doors along the side, or sides, which can be opened and thus during pleasant weather permit all the breezes which are going to whistle through it. No rain or snow can of course drive into these sheds, but all loading and unloading must be done out of doors. The three yards in the town in which I live have sheds of this character. There is the old one which was the pioneer, and the other lumbermen who built followed suit. I do not, however, see many sheds of this kind.

I was in a yard which formed a court and around the sides of it were sheds half open—that is, opening toward the yard with the backs tightly boarded up. I went into another yard in the same town and it had similar sheds. No. 3 had the same kind of sheds; as also did No. 4. The kind of sheds in a town depends largely on the style the first fellow on the ground puts up. We are imitative animals and are usually quite content to let somebody else do our thinking for us.

"I don't want any of those half-closed sheds," a yard man remarked. "I want a shed open on both sides, and I want it in the yard, clear from all fences and buildings so that I can drive right around it. Here is an advantage:

Suppose a team is loading from a particular bent and another team comes in for the same grade of lumber. It isn't necessary for that last team to stand around until the first one is loaded, but it can drive around on the opposite side of the shed and load up right from the same pile. From sheds of this kind I will handle more lumber in a given time than can be handled from any other make. And when it comes to protecting lumber, if you have a good roof over it it is pretty well cared for."

"What is the matter with my shed?" a dealer asked, who had a large closed one, with a foot of opening below the sill, all around. "It keeps my stock well shielded from the elements, yet I get a fine circulation of air under the piles. To remain so? Well, no; when everything is completed that opening will be closed," he laughingly remarked. This same unfinished condition, however, is one which some dealers take to, the idea of letting air under the piles being carried out by some yard men.

A retailer who has recently traveled many miles, covering in part a half dozen states, told me it was surprising how few sheds worthy of the name he saw. He is of the opinion that the average lumberman as yet lacks a great deal of being up to snuff. That has been my observation, but they are getting there all the same. It is senseless to look for a harvest until the seed is sown. The lumber shed seed has begun to sprout in a healthy way.

HYPNOTIC POWER.

An acquaintance who is a close observer, having visited a prominent yard man, one in fact who is known throughout the retail world, was asked what was the keynote of the dealer's success. "Hypnotism!" he answered. I smiled at his wisdom, but he may have taken it for an incredulous smile.

"Well, what is it?" he asked. "He is full of it. I have

known men to visit his place swearing vengeance, but he would shake hands with them and sell them a load of lumber to take home."

There is no sense in making light of this element in the makeup of the human animal. It is appreciably possessed by many, and doubtless by all to some extent. Many of us



"There were our best girls."

have seen snakes and cats "charm" birds, as it is called, and no doubt it is a species of hypnotism.

Not long ago a yard man was telling me that last fall he went north expecting to buy two cars of lumber, and before he had got away from a certain dealer he had been induced to buy six. He said when he went away and got to

thinking about it he was almost frightened. I asked him if he didn't wish that the wholesale man had cast still more of a spell over him, and he said he did. "If I had known how lumber was going I would have mortgaged my shirt to buy it," he said.

No doubt this magnetic quality in a man helps him along no matter in what business he may engage. It draws people to him, and naturally we like and will favor the persons or things to which we are attracted. Now there were our best girls; didn't they draw us possibly miles and miles? And for their sakes didn't we empty our pockets into the money drawers of the liverymen, the ice cream parlor proprietors and the like? When the people of a community take to a dealer in lumber, when he makes of himself a good fellow in their eyes and weaves over them a sort of hypnotic influence, he is going to sell many a bill which otherwise would have gone to the other fellow. I know as many as a dealer or two who I believe would do well to read this little article two or three times. It was not an age ago that I heard a dealer declare with some warmth that he didn't give a rap whether he sold a certain bill or not. Maybe he wouldn't give a rap to sell the bill, but it was mighty poor business policy for him to say so. We should always aim to talk in a way that people will believe we mean what we say. This dealer had worked hard to get the bill—so hard that it was plain he wanted it—and then for him to turn around and huffily say that he didn't want it did not tally with what had gone before. He ought to have assumed such winning manners and treated so well the fellow with whom he had been trying to deal that the prospective customer would think he was committing a crime if the bill was placed elsewhere. Tact! tact! That is what we need, and if we had to buy it its weight in gold would be a small price.

HANDLING TOWN AND COUNTRY TRADE.

There is difference in ginger, but not so much as there is in men. All ginger was probably made for a specific purpose, while men are adapted for all sorts of work. Where ginger can fill one place man can fill places innumerable. A yard man recently told me he had discovered that his career as a lumberman was limited, owing to his inability to get the portion of the farmer trade that he thought he ought to have. He had become conscious of this, and as a consequence he might, when opportunity offered, make a change in his business. Town trade, he said, gave him no worry. In this direction he felt able to hold his own with his competitors, but when it came to dealing with the farmers he knew he was lacking in some quality.

I want to say there is hope without end for any man who will analyze himself in that manner. Few do it. If we do not succeed we are disposed at least to divide the blame; we take the unction to our souls that if the rest of humanity had come up to the scratch we would also have been there. When a man will ferret out his thin places he can then go to work and patch them up.

I met another dealer who said he had very little country trade. He could not seem to "get hold of the farmer," he said. Yet he spoke of it in a way that might lead one to think that the fault, if fault there were, was with the farmer and not with him. The fact is, the right kind of man will work about anything, even a farmer when the farmer wants lumber.

The first dealer named was asked why he could not sell to the farm trade, and in other words he said he was not jockey enough. For instance, when he gave figures on a bill and afterward felt convinced that a competitor had underbid him he did not feel like making a smaller price unless there was some excuse for it. He wanted the other fellow to see there was some excuse. He wanted to pose at a certain standard in the eyes of the man with whom he

was trying to deal. "The farmer," said he, "will come in, sit down and keep mum as to the prices offered by a competitor. I may feel that my prices have been beaten, yet I haven't the gall to say to him that I figured a little high and will knock off something. If he would only give me an opening, tell me what he could get the lumber for elsewhere, it would be easy to say to him that I wanted his trade, and that I wasn't going to stand on a few dollars. In that event I would have some excuse for revising my first bid."

"Why can you sell more readily to town people?" I asked.

"Because I can make them show their hands," he said.

Plainly this man's failure is due to the fact that he lacks the ability to crack the farmer open as he would an oyster shell and see what is inside of him. The farmer is too stoical—too Indian-like—for him. Too unbusinesslike would perhaps be putting it in better words. He will not talk. If a business man he would shoot off his mouth, tell the yard man that he was too high, that he could buy the same lumber elsewhere for so and so. Then the lumberman could get at him in a businesslike way.

I know another yard man who sells lumber to farmers as naturally as sparks fly upward. He handles the rural trade well for the reason that he has made a study of it. He was cut out for it. He will reach a little farther for a farmer than he will for anybody else and, what is better, he enjoys the contact.

This again brings to mind the question of the quality of a salesman. If any man who thinks that an A1 salesman is often found in a lumber yard will look around his mind will be disabused of the idea. As in the cases cited above, there are men who can sell lumber to townspeople and who fall down when it comes to dealing with farmers. There are others whose forte is dealing with farmers. Still there are others whose forte has not yet been developed. They do not know what it is to be a salesman, and have never tried to learn. They go at it in an awkward way, sell lumber

when they can and at other times leave somebody else to sell it. They resort to no devices. To sell goods of any kind successfully a man must be an inventor. He must be able to originate catchy methods, and while carrying them out retain the confidence of the purchaser.

"Selling lumber," said a dealer, "is a result of keeping everlastingly at it. Few of us take into account the importance of personal influence. When I go for a house bill



"Ought to have a fine front door."

I start out with the determination that I will stick. I want a buyer to feel that I want his trade, and that I will put myself out to get it. I can afford to follow him up as long as my competitor can. I know a canvasser who says he catches his victims on 'pin hooks.' I sometimes think I am guilty of the same thing. Last spring I was trying to sell a bill for a thousand-dollar house. I had seen the fellow two or three times, but didn't feel a bit confident that I would get his money. One morning as he was passing the office I called him in. I said to him I had been thinking that his house, located as it was going to be, ought to have a fine

front door, and setting out a showy one I told him I was interested enough in the appearance that his house would present to give that door to him if his lumber went from my yard. I could see it took. 'Let's see,' said he, 'how much did you figure the bill?' I turned to the estimate book and gave him the amount. 'All right,' said he, 'I guess you can have it.' I don't suppose my competitor and myself were \$4 apart on the bill, and I have no doubt the gift of the door settled the matter. Of course I couldn't offer a door to old Banker Jones who was going to build a mansion and who knew the ways of the world. You must pick your men."

KEEPING THE POACHER OUT.

The effect of the action of those dealers in Chicago and elsewhere whom we call "poachers," and who so often cause the yard men to sweat blood, is different on different individuals. Once one of these dealers ships lumber into the territory of some yard men, those yard men at once apply to their local or general organization and want to know what can be done to head off the villains! I have heard many yard men talk about the poachers, and it seemed to me that very often it was random talk. The only way to keep them out is to keep them out. There is territory into which they never send a car. The dealers rise up and say, "Nay, nay, Mr. Poacher!" and the dealers carry the day.

"I wouldn't think I had learned my business," said a yard man, "if I couldn't keep the poachers out of my town. How do I do it? Keep on good terms with the contractors. These contractors know every time when there is any intention of shipping in a bill, and I believe it is rarely done except on their advice. A farmer who is going to build may get it into his head that he will send away for his lumber just as he often sends to supply houses for other goods, but he will not do it once in a million times without consulting his contractor or carpenter. That is where I

get in my work, by being on good terms with the contractor. If he says to the farmer that the poacher will manipulate the grades, which he often does, or that the bill will run over or under the requirements and he will have lumber left over, or be obliged to fill in from the local yards, which nine times in ten occurs one way or the other, the farmer is discouraged. 'See' the contractor? Well, I had rather 'see' him to the tune of several dollars than to have a car of lumber shipped in from the outside. If I couldn't play checkers with the poachers I would throw up the sponge."

A very prominent retail man recently said, "So far as the business of these men is concerned, if they sell to consumers only and do not pretend to sell to the retail trade it is perfectly legitimate, as I look at it, but that is not saying that I want them as competitors. Not one of them has ever made a shipment here, but to keep them out I have been obliged to sell many bills at small profit."

This yard man voices my sentiments exactly. If these men want to sell lumber to consumers the constitution of the United States says they may do so, but that is not saying we do not want them out of the way. We want the full swing of trade ourselves—but seeing they are in the way we must make the best of it. Selfishness is at the bottom of that great law of self preservation; consequently if we can fight the poacher off we are going to do it.

The policy quoted above is that of positive, aggressive dealers who have been successful in their business. There are others whose make-up does not fit them to take the bull by the horns in that way. A not over confident yard man talked to me as though his business would go to the deminution bowwows because a couple of barn bills had been shipped into his territory. He thought it was the one deadly drawback to the lumber business. He was a young man, so I stroked my blond mustache and said to him that he should not be ready to give up the ghost at this early stage of the game. I told him that few men ever got to the top of the ladder without slipping back a rung now and

then in rainy weather. It was ascertained, however, that this dealer did not stand pat with the contractors of his town. Some of the very men who could be of service to him in these emergencies he had estranged. That won't do, beloved. We must make friends of these contractors. In an office that was visited not long ago the cigars were handed out to three contractors who came in, one after the other, and, what was satisfying, the box was not returned to its place without being held out to me. I said to myself, "That yard man is a good fellow;" and do you not suppose the contractors thought the same thing? When you want to catch mice in a trap you bait it, don't you?

This kind of talk, I am aware, will not go with certain yard men. Not a month ago I heard a dealer damning the contractors. He said the less he had to do with them the better; he wanted the farmers' trade. On general principles I do not fancy this damning business, and I doubt if the wisest men damn anybody. Diplomacy, with rare exceptions, is better than swear words. The average contractor is as anxious to get along as smoothly and successfully with his work as the rest of us are. Make a composite man of those who are engaged in the different legitimate callings and each man would about fit the same mold.

A Kansas yard man remarked that a certain contractor was one of the meanest men to whom he had ever sold lumber, yet he said he sold more to him than to any other man in town.

"How do you get along with him?" was asked.

"Watch him," was the reply.

SELLING LUMBER FROM SAMPLE.

The idea has been broached by several dealers that it might be a good thing to have an office in the center of town where samples would be kept while the stock would lie piled on cheaper ground outside. One dealer asks: "Has this system been tried?"

One dealer said: "I would have everything down town, both office and lumber, but I would not separate them. To follow out the modern way of handling lumber no great amount of land is required. The consumer of lumber is not used to purchasing from sample. I will admit he might as well—but he is not used to it. If he wants only a half dozen boards he wants to see piles of lumber. Piles and piles of it seem to impress him. It does him good to go out in the yard and have you tumble over lumber for him, and then if he thinks he is getting the cream of it he is jolly. I like to manage so that every one of my customers thinks he is getting the cream of my stock. You can convey that impression pretty often, too, if you make an effort in that direction."

This is one man's opinion. It sounds sensible enough and represents a judgment that for maturity is far above the average; yet if I wanted to sell lumber from a down town office and store my stock on cheap ground elsewhere I would be guided by no man's opinion. "Where has it been done?" or "Who has tried it?" cuts no figure. The man who always has an eye out for precedent never wins in a big way. Genius repudiates precedent. This has been proved in business life a thousand times. In the literary world the great writers of our age have given it to precedent right in the neck. If a yard man feels that he has a genius to sell lumber by sample he need ask no man's consent. A trial will determine whether the method is practical in his case, and in no other way can it be determined. We must throw our personality into our work if we would succeed. One man is more to himself than all

others can be to him. He is the ego, the power. How would others do it if they were working at his job, isn't the question to ask. Once a man feels that he is right he should go ahead and let the world wag as it will, and let tongues also wag as they will. Every man has his work to do, and if he does it by reflected light it will lack character and determination.

"I took the bull by the horns when I located in the center of the town," said a live Minnesota yard man. "It was tradition to establish yards on railroads, no matter if the roads only touched the limits of a town, and the first argument I heard was that I would have to haul all my lumber from the track to my yard! What a piece of news that was! I had become tired of selling merchandise where the people would be obliged to go and look me up."

"Well, they don't have to look you up now," I remarked as I glanced up at the magnificent shed front, and not half a block away saw dry goods stores with throngs of women going out and in. "That was what I was after," was the laconic reply.

This man felt the want and he had the courage to fill it. Today his position is envied by his brother dealers. At the time he broke ground for his new plant those same brother dealers would have said he was a lunatic. The audacity, to smash down the old orthodox fence in that manner!

The intensely personal man who does not hesitate to drive new stakes is the maker of history. The world may make faces at him, but he regards it as the act of vacant minds. On and on he goes, and always with him is that satisfying thought that instead of playing ape he is making use of the ability which his Maker has placed in his keeping.

THE SCHOOL THAT WOULD PLEASE THE YARD MAN.

A retail dealer was telling me that a knowledge of human nature ought to protect the lumberman from loss in his dealings with people. "I believe," he said, "that unreliability is written on the face of every person who is not reliable. I am not speaking of those people who through some misfortune cannot pay; but there are slick fellows in every community who live at the expense of others and whose object it is to beat their way through the world. They are not known as deadbeats except by the tradesmen who have learned them. They wear good clothes, pass in society, and perhaps pray as loud as the rest of us. Have I been caught by them? I have to the tune of as many dollars as would take me to the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. There is a lawyer in this town who got into me \$24 before I had hardly opened my doors. You can't collect 24 cents from him. Yet he does business right along and passes for a decent citizen. He has the art of regretting down fine. Suggest to him that he pay and apparently he is the sorriest fellow in seven counties because he is unable to do so. I can now read in his face that he never means to pay anybody if he can help it. I tell you what kind of a school I wish my boy could attend—one where phrenology, physiognomy and good horse sense were taught. Let the blank Latin and higher mathematics go to thunder. The greatest misfortune which has ever come to me in a business way was due to my inability to read men. Give an industrious boy a knowledge of the common school studies and men, and I believe he is well equipped for life. Somehow the frills don't appear to do us much good when it comes down to earning a living."

It was a short little sermon, but I know it will appeal to the good sense of many a man. The most of you have standing accounts on your books which will continue to stand, all owing to your inability to read the faces of the

people whose names are at the head of them. And after all if we only know how to read faces very often they are as an open book—they can readily be graded from culls to clear finish.

GRADES IN YARD MEN.

There are grades and grades in lumber as we all know. We know, too, that for years they have been deteriorating right along. And while grades of lumber have gone down hill the men who deal in it have been climbing up the hill. Words accurately describing the high grade lumbermen today would appear fulsome. Those lumbermen are reaching out in more than one direction. The other day I sat down with a yard man, and he filled my heart with joy. It is acknowledged that he is an expert in his line, but press the right button and lo, the other side of the man appears. He is no longer a lumberman. He talks about music, literature, the destiny of the human soul. His sympathies reach out and embrace the unfortunate. I wonder why it can't be so with more of us? I get tired of the hard features of business life. So many imagine that "business" must be unfeeling; that it must dull our finer senses; that it does not march in the procession with sentiment, heart, and the golden rule; that unless we talk shop morning, noon and night we are coming down from the pedestal on which the ideal business man stands. That is dead wrong, my friends. We do business that we may have a livelihood. It should stand in the way of neither our moral nor our intellectual growth. It should not retard our preparation for the life which every sane man hopes may follow this one. It is a means to the end, and to a noble end, too, but when business is a great scythe that mows down the man I pity the man.

Then when it comes to the finesse, as we Frenchmen say, of the lumber business the most of it has been learned within a few years comparatively. The retail men have gone forward in this regard as have the wholesale men.

Not many years ago lumber at both retail and wholesale was sold by main strength and awkwardness. Boards—that was all lumber was. The dealer did not lie awake nights devising some way to manipulate those boards so they would bring more money. It was not thought it was any more necessary to cover piles of lumber than though they were stone piles. Let the elements and thieves prey upon them. I should like to see a yard of twenty years ago set down alongside of one that could be selected today. How much difference do you think there would be between them? As much as there is between the old Rocket and a modern locomotive that makes a mile in less than a minute. In the one there would be a paucity of stocks and grades, housed under the sky; in the other hundreds of items carefully selected for specific purposes, and as carefully stored. In the one the yard man would be pottering around, selling lumber when he could, and when he ran short corresponding with some one mill man for a further supply. In the other the dealer would have an eye to the north, south and west for the material he wanted, as well as an eye to the sash and door factory that would give him the best and cheapest job in finish. To be an up-to-date retail lumberman these days a man must be a merchant; if he is a slobmagullion he will lack furlongs of being up to date. To do a successful retail business implies sizing up, reaching out and mastering men to a certain extent.

The lumber yard will no doubt go right on improving. In a certain town a visitor who was unacquainted with sheds would say there was no lumber yard there. There is not a board or stick of timber in sight. There is an immense building that would attract attention; but tear the sign down and the novice would not know but it was a structure in which they stored grain or made beer. And when I went in the man in charge was sweeping. Think of a house broom for cleaning up a lumber shed! A few years ago they wouldn't have used a scraper, to say nothing about a broom. Mud, dust, dirt and rats it was thought belonged to it.

The department store idea more and more keeps running through the noddles of yard men. There are leaders in the business who are alive to a premonition that they will be obliged to carry a more varied stock than they are now carrying. There are, indeed, those who think they will be forced to carry about everything in the building line. There are yard men who argue that the coming yard will be less numerous than is the present one, and that it will require a capital of from \$15,000 to \$25,000 to conduct a decent lumber business, instead of a half or a quarter of that amount as is the rule today. In my opinion there will be more yards instead of fewer; still I do not claim to be able to see farther into a block of granite than the rest of you. Nothing except death and taxes is more certain, however, than that there are men in business at this time who, if they hold a place in trade, will have to pick up their ears and heels. They may keep along in a one-yard town where there is no competition, lounge around at some street corner resort and talk politics, but by and by when the burg shall increase in size and a live dealer shall come in the old musty bones will have to hustle, else they will go underground in the business graveyard.

Do you know that men are smart these days? They keep an eye on the ground to learn what may be approaching. I expect they will go on getting smarter and shrewder. We have reached a point now where those qualities begin to tell in our offspring. There are boys that are smarter than chain lightning. It is surprising how many young men control big affairs. They are slicker than the old stock, and often faster.

THE RAGE FOR BIG TOWNS.

It amuses me to see how many foolish things are said by the metropolitan newspapers, one reason for these foolish things, no doubt, being that we, the foolish readers of them, demand that they be said. Just now we are running wild

over the population of our cities. The city that has not increased in size since the last census enumeration is made to feel disgraced, and those which have had an increase of from 75 to 200 percent are held up as fit locations for the New Jerusalem. Wherein is there more honor for a city to have 100,000 inhabitants than half of that number? What special virtue is there in a crowd of people? Where the special virtue would come in would be for a quarter of the inhabitants of the big cities to get out of them. That would be something worth talking about. Let them get out on the broad prairies and raise corn and hogs and have enough to eat the year round. There would be solid and special virtue in that, but we do not have the good sense to shout for it. We can shout for nothing but the big aggregation—for the unnatural, the buncombe.

We are laying the emphasis on the wrong portion of our people. If the country districts show no increase in population no one will cry out. Not a word of regret will be heard. This tends to pain me. Since I have become a bloated land-owner, and in addition own an old black cow, a dog and some hens and roosters, I cannot with good grace hear a thing slightly said of the man with the hoe, for I am somewhat he. Last spring I bought a fine hoe, with a red tag on the handle, with which to hoe a patch of cabbage. When I would appear dressed like a fashion plate among the yard men of a town little would they think that perhaps not twenty-four hours before I was bending over the hoe. I hoed the cabbage faithfully. The worms ate them all up, but I saved the hoe, and I can prove it.

What you most want, beloved, is that outsiders shall let your business alone and permit you to sell lumber at retail. What I don't care a rap is whether one town has a citizen or two more than some other town or not, but I do want every town to have a good steam-heated hotel, pretty dining-room girls and cushioned 'buses in which to ride to and from the stations. As for myself, I have seen all the crowds I want to. I wouldn't give a nickel to look upon "a sea of

upturned faces" that would cover a township. In the lives of all of us, provided we do not go insane up to that time, there should come a period when it is more of an object to pass along comfortably than it is to have our ribs stove in.

If there is enough vitality in our blood to withstand the survival of the fittest, a few ages hence those in whose veins it shall course will be praying for fewer people, as they are in China today, instead of cracking their heels together because their towns show a majority over some other towns. I trust that our descendants may know more than we do.

METHODS OF BUYING YARDS.

There are ways and ways of buying and selling lumber yards. A retail dealer told me he could sell at 40 percent premium on his inventory. You know of course what a condition like that implies. The yard is doing a steady and profitable business and is in every respect desirable. A yard man not long ago sold at a premium of \$2 a thousand on the lumber in pile over and above the price it cost to lay it where it was. I suppose he had on hand 400,000 feet, the bonus amounting to \$800. Another yard man when approached on the subject of selling replied, "That shed there cost me \$250; if you want to invoice it at \$1,200 we will call it a go."

There are retail men who repudiate all this premium business. They say that a man is not wise to pay a premium for a business; that the good will of a business is an asset which is of little value; that it was the man that made the business and he is not sold with the outfit. If these men prefer to start a new yard to paying a premium for one already established that is their business. There are others who are willing to break into the trade on the premium plan. After a good deal of rubbing up against the yard man and knowing the value they place on their business, under ordinary circumstances I should not expect to be able to buy a desirable yard in six months without paying

more for it than the invoices of the goods showed. I was told on what short notice a yard was sold. The man who bought it was a stranger in the town. He looked around, saw the yard that suited him, went in and struck up a conversation with the owner. They walked around, and the newcomer saw what there was in stock. Incidentally, apparently, the yard man was asked if he had any desire to sell out, and replied he had never had anything yet, except his wife and children, that he wouldn't sell. He was asked how much he would take, and a lump sum was named. "I will take it," said the stranger. "Here is \$500; draw up a contract and I will take possession next Monday and pay you the balance of the purchase price."

That was the way the bargain was struck and so far as I have learned both parties were satisfied. "No doubt," said a yard man who was speaking of the deal, "the original owner of the yard set his price so that he was safe; but, really, how much of a figure does \$500 or \$600 cut when it comes to buying a business that suits you? It amounts to nothing. I know a dealer who was looking for a yard and he tried to strike a bargain with the owner of one of the best yards in his section, but a bonus of \$800 was asked. I believe the other fellow offered \$500. They couldn't get together and the man bought a yard in a nearby town and was glad to get rid of it again in less than twelve months. Then he was out again looking for another location."

When speaking on this subject a yard man recited an experience that was interesting—decidedly so to him at the time. "It was a one-yard town," said this dealer, "and a good one, too. I talked purchase and found I could buy the yard by paying \$900 more than I thought the thing was worth. You know when we are buying we want everything inventoried low, and when we sell we want it as high as the law will allow. This man owned his yard ground, with an acre adjoining which he used for his horse pasture. For the land he wanted a few hundred dollars more than I wanted to pay. Then I thought he ran his office and shed up a little

above the normal. Instead of paying him his price, and having the whole thing my own way, I put in a second yard and was glad to get out in less than eighteen months. That man stayed there for years, had a good business right along and no doubt the real estate is worth four times as much as it was when I was so fool-headed I did not buy it. A good thing is worth a good price; when we forget that we are apt to make some poor bargains."

THE ARBITRATION IDEA.

This idea of arbitration is becoming more and more in favor. When two nations feel like giving it to one another under the fifth rib with powder and ball the plea is made by many that it is silly to do such a thing, and that they would better let some disinterested nation say how the difficulty shall be settled. That is the civilized way of it, there is no question about that. In our best and thoughtful moments we all see it in that light. Away back they didn't think so, however. If we had lived then, and I had not agreed with you, your friends might have poured melted lead into my ears and down my throat to convince me what's what. It was not uncommon for good men to fill other good men with lead in that way. When we read history we see it has often been reputably good men—God-fearing men—who have raised special deviltry in the way of torturing and killing their neighbors. I know if I had lived in those days the logic of the situation would have forced me to be a holy terror, for then I could have avoided being tortured myself and having to torture others. The worst men out of the box are on record as cutting the fewest throats.

The idea of filling people with lead has followed right down from those old days. When it reached a point where the offenders could not easily be caught and the lead poured into them the gun was invented, and thus the lead was made to chase them up. It is the same idea, only slightly modified.

I could name several places where this arbitration idea ought to be in force in the retail lumber line. "I will give you so much," said a yard man to me, naming an amount, "if you will get my competitors to sign a document binding them to sell material at certain prices." I looked at the man. He appeared sane enough; at any rate he was out of the insane asylum. He had a head in which, to judge from outward appearances, there was a place for brains. If a man should tell him he didn't know beans when the bag was untied he would resent it as an insult. Then I went around and visited his competitors. They, too, were decent looking men. They had been furnished with domes of thought like the rest of us. I would guarantee that in a horse trade they would be as shrewd as gypsies. One of them told me how he had helped along an improvement in his town in a certain direction. I know if I had been broke he would have loaned me a dollar. I looked them all over, talked with them, and then went to the hotel and did a bit of musing.

"Here are three men," I thought, "who would kick me out of the office if I should go back and say to them that they do not know enough to eat pudding when it is set before them. Surrounded by a good territory, furnishing all the lumber that is consumed in a thrifty little city, yet they are hauling and pulling like so many unbroken steers. Then again, they have it all to themselves—only three of them—and they have the whole shooting match right in their hands. Why don't they arbitrate their differences? They needn't call me, or anybody else, in to do it. If they have a spark of common sense in their heads that should be the arbitrator. Why don't they ring the old town bell, get together, and having come together pull together?"

I thought on in this mild and inoffensive way about these fellows until supper was ready. You see the Old Scratch was raised when the third man came into this town. The new lumberman is often a cake of yeast that will raise anything. Do you suppose that this new man came here and engaged in selling lumber just for fun? He would be likely

to do that very thing, wouldn't he? The two dealers thought he had no business here and set about to crowd him out. Why didn't they telephone him to come over, tell him they were glad to make his acquaintance, ask him to meet them that evening at the best restaurant in town, and then when they were all stuffed with grub and feeling happy say to him, "Jim, we'll own right up it doesn't suit us your coming here, but here you are, and we must make the best of it. We are good Americans, good Christians; therefore it would go against the grain to do you dirt. Now let's get together in some way that will be fair all around, live like neighbors and do business like sensible men."

That kind of talk would have suited Jim, or anybody else. It doesn't take much of a blow to smash that icicle that hangs between so many of us. Often we are offish, independent, and sag back like a balky horse, because we think the other fellow delights in showing the same qualities, and often he cuts up in a like manner for the purpose of duplicating us. If we would walk right up and let the man shine out of us instead of letting that miserable little devil, selfishness, claw around in our brains and muddle them, nine times in ten the other fellow would meet us half way. Take that yard man who asked me to act as peace-maker; he was ready to meet his competitors but he did not think they were ready to meet him. For aught he knew they were as ready as he was.

How I do wish that the retail lumbermen in many a town could see this matter in the light as here presented. I know they would feel better in every respect. Especially when they invoiced, they would feel glad to know that they had made more dollars than they would had they played the part of the dog in the manger. Life is too short for these little tuppenny trade differences and jealousies to be given rein. They should be cracked on the head every time they bob up.

DIVISION OF SHED BINS.

This is the way I recently saw it done: Suppose you place uprights, 2x4, or even lighter material, in the front and back of your bins, thus forming divisions, each of which will hold a 6, 8, 10 or 12 inch board, as the case may be. You are piling, say, 10-inch finish. Instead of carrying up the pile several boards wide, as is ordinarily done, you pile the lumber between two of these uprights, gaged to accommodate a 10-inch board, and continue to pile it as high as the bin if you so choose. Then you can handle your other widths of finish, flooring and siding—or other grades, if you desire—in the same way.

No doubt in your mind's eye you have already seen the advantage. The pile is never tumbling over. It is there to stay for the very good reason that it is held in place. In the hands of some men the boards in a pile of lumber seemingly have as many legs as a caterpillar. They are all the time on the move, getting out of line, and even off the pile. I saw a pile of 6-inch stuff that had been put up four boards wide, and possibly five feet high. In selling from this pile three widths had been taken down nearly to the foundation, leaving the other standing, and over that had tumbled. It looked like a blasted rose in January. If there had been a partition between each width this would not have happened. Of course, the lath for sticking will have to be cut to tally with the width of the board on which it is used.

This system of piling did not appear to be regarded with any particular favor in the yard in which it is used. A former employee had put in the partitions—and that was all there was to it. The next day I explained it to a yard man fifty miles from the town in which I saw it, and he took to it like a fish to water. "Why, of course," said he, "that is just the thing. Why didn't I think of it before? I often want to keep several grades in one bin, and that system solves it. You can put the different grades side by side, and

they won't mix, and you know where to put your hand right on them."

"Well, what are the disadvantages?" I asked, wanting to get at the unfavorable side.

"I see none," was the reply, "except that piling might be a trifle slower, and when loading the boards could not be handled with hardly the freedom that they could when not confined so closely."

You never know what will hit a man. This yard man was enthusiastic over this little kink which costs to introduce it only a small amount, and which will save room and labor. It is good for a lazy man for he has no piles to even up. Once up they are always up until they are sold and cleared away.

PLEASING THE FARMER CUSTOMER.

There was no business going on and we had whittled until our knives were tired out. We had told each other from what section of country we hailed and how many children we had. It does not take two men long when whittling to become acquainted, even familiar, and I imagine it is because they are engaged in the same democratic occupation. If one were whittling and the other doing something else it would take them longer to get together, if, indeed, they ever got together. It is a grand thing for people to regard themselves as standing on common ground, for it is only then that their sympathies are akin. When I feel that I am on a reserved seat and you on the bleaching board, or vice versa, there is a long and deep chasm between us. There is never the difference between us that in our dejected or high-headed moments we think there is, but we get it in our minds there is and act accordingly.

This yard man had something to say about the way he "tickled" his customers, as he expressed it. "Nearly all my trade—or at least eight-tenths of it—is farmer trade," said he, "and it requires some tact to handle it. The farmer

is 'agin' those people who consider themselves above him socially. If you notice, it is the farming community against the town right along. Give the farmers the chance to vote for somebody for local office who is not regarded as a 'town



"Told how many children we had."

man,' and see how quick they do it every time. One thing; I have aimed to dress so that my farmer customers would take no exception on that score. I don't want them to think I am stuck up."

I felt a little uneasy during the latter part of these comments. Just before I started out on that trip I had bought a flaming necktie which cost me 35 cents, had the creases pressed down my pants legs, and that morning had paid a dime to have my shoes shined so that I could see my face in them. Almost involuntarily I tucked my tie out of sight down under my waistcoat, as I learned in polite English society to call my vest.

"When we go in," the yard man continued, "I will show you my tobacco box and pipes. I never set up the cigars, as a common thing; they cost too much and don't fill the bill. There are a good many pipes full of tobacco in a

quarter pound of tobacco that costs ten cents. I buy a cheap corncob pipe by the gross, and then when the farmer has smoked his fill he puts the pipe in his pocket if he wants to and thinks he has been well treated. It is not unusual when one of my customers comes to town for him to hitch his horses, come in and get his smoke. It partakes of a social feature with them. I tell the boy to watch the tobacco box and see that it never runs dry. I smoke cigars



"Hit the pipe."

myself sometimes, but I never hesitate to hit the pipe with a farmer when he comes in."

Then he branched out a little broader. "I sustain what I call a literary bureau," he said. "All sorts of papers, circulars and other kinds of reading matter come to me, and instead of throwing them into the stove I put them on a shelf and tell a farmer to fill his pocket with them. I throw my newspapers up there, too, when I am through with them. Now pretty soon, when the evenings get a little longer, I will begin to run my literary bureau full blast. I have thought I would get some of the exchanges from

the local papers to give out. The average farmer does not spend much money on papers, but all the same he likes to read them. I have had the wives of some of these farmers call in front of my place and ask if I had any papers to spare. What I want is to keep my customers thinking about me as much as possible, and thinking that I am ready to show them these little favors out of my good feelings toward them. I regard all this as cheap advertising and at the same time it is what I call social advertising. By assuming top-lofty airs I feel confident that a portion of my trade would leave me. If I was catering to a town trade it would be an entirely different proposition. Then I might try to work some other racket."

When we went in I took a look at the tobacco sundries. The pipes cost a cent and a half each. "I suppose that \$5 a year will run my tobacco department, and I am not sure but it does me \$500 worth of good. At any rate I wouldn't dispense with it if a man would give me \$50," was the yard man's estimate of the pipe and tobacco scheme.

"Got any more snaps hid around here?" I asked.

"That is all," he laughingly said.

On my way to the hotel I reflected how many baited hooks there are thrown out for poor, weak mortals to catch at; and we catch at them, too. If it is not a corn cob pipe filled with cheap tobacco it is something else. We are all endowed with a sort of catching nature.

MANY NEW YARDS.

"When this wave of prosperity shall have passed over there will be more lumber yards for sale than you can shake a stick at," a yard man remarked.

Well, I am not so sure about that. During those times we call hard as much money is made in lumber as in other lines of business. And when we look at it right it is nonsense for a man to get out of his regular business because

the times are drawing a tight rein. I heard a prominent yard man talking along this line a while ago who had a good opportunity to sell his yard. "Why should I sell?" he asked. "If I should want to go in again it might take a long time to find a place that would suit me. A desirable yard is not to be picked up every day. And if I should want to stay out I could not safely invest my money so that it would bring me more than 4 percent, and it takes a pile of money at that rate of interest to support a family. I don't know where money can be safer than in good lumber, well insured, and in such book accounts as I have."

I am also of the opinion that should there come a pinch in the times and good yards were offered for sale they would be picked up on short notice. The business man of any experience has learned that these so-called hard times are the pendulum swinging one way, and that soon it will come back. Do you think hard times could be of such a nature in this country that they would stay for any great length of time with us? Again, there are men in large numbers who in the past three years have tried to buy the kind of lumber yards they wanted and who failed to get them. Let good yards be offered for sale and these men would rush in as buyers, willing to wait a little while for the balance of trade to come their way.

No doubt, should the times squeeze us a trifle, there would be yards to sell. There are yards to sell now. If you want them you can be steered against them. With yards in nearly every little burg in the United States, it would be singular if somebody did not want to sell out. But they are not the crack yards. That grade of yard, if put on the market, would change hands before you could say Jack Robinson.

This large number of yards is making war. It seems to me I have never known of so much scrapping as there is in the retail world this blessed minute. And much of it comes about because another yard has gone in. Not long ago an individual dealer located in a town in which there

were three line yards, and in that town I was told of a bill that had been sold for \$4.25 under the wholesale list, and to induce the buyer to take it at that price he was presented with a five-dollar bill. This is one of the extreme cases, but there are scores of others which are bad enough. By the same token there will be more scrapping, for the present number of yards will certainly be increased. A couple of years ago I had a prophetic vision that there would be this increase in yards, and those yard men who did not want it to come true really taunted me to my very beard! To be sure, I have no beard, but it sounds dramatic and like war to use the expression. They said the reverse would be the case; that the little fellows with little money would be crowded out and thus the number of yards be reduced.

Beloved, things do not come our way for the simple reason that we want them to. If they did, you and I would have so many dollars that we could throw them to the wind and not miss them. Instead of dictating how things shall be we are often dictated to. Now, there is my acre pasture out back of the barn, with my one old black cow in it. One of my good friends has 3,000 acres just over the roll of the prairie yonder, with steers on every knoll and under the shade of every tree. It would do my soul good to be such a cattle king, but I haven't had the speed to get there. And I don't know as I am going to be held responsible because in the steer line I am unable to go a 2:08 gait, either. No, things will not come our way simply because of a desire in the matter. We big fellows in the retail world may want all the little yards to close up shop and quit, but they won't do it because we want them to. They think they have a right to live. What if this big cattle owner should say to me he was going to do all the cattle business in this section of the country? I would tell him to go and hang himself; that I and my old black cow would be right on deck yet awhile. These small yard men will make some such reply to us big moguls when we tip our hats to them and politely ask them if they will please be so kind as to quit.

I know of no other dealer in merchandise who can raise so much deuce to the square foot as can the retail lumberman. When he gets his dander up he demoralizes not only the trade of his own town but that of every town around him. In speaking of the disposition of so many yard men to do this an old dealer remarked: "Retail lumbermen are the biggest fools on the face of the earth! In this town there are at least \$75,000 in stocks and yard improvements, \$50,000 on books—\$125,000 involved—yet like a lot of dogs in the manger we are fighting one another off and nobody is making a cent. You can't find another such a blank lot of business men. At that sign that you see across the street down yonder there is a new grocery, and a good-sized concern it is, too. But because they have started in there you can't go to the other groceries and buy tea and butter and flour at cost! They aren't such blank fools as that! My idea is that when there is a yard too many, buy it out if you can, but never try to fight it out, for I have seen it demonstrated that it is possible for one man to fight as well as another."

The huge joke of all this scrapping business is that every man engaged in it knows the remedy. It is no farther away from him than the offices of his neighbors. But when we get bull-headed from pride and selfishness, the good Lord help us!

THE WHOLESALE DEALER'S COMPLAINT.

As we were speeding along on the boulevard in a carriage with a monogram on the door, the wholesale man had something to say about the yard man who pays his bills in a provoking manner.

The world is not full of people who have been trained to exact business methods; when we have been so trained, however, irregular methods are very objectionable. Now there is my best girl. She could keep house well enough for the King of England; still, the king would have to

mind his eye, for if he should come into the parlor with muddy feet she would shoo him out with a broom. You see she has an idea of the eternal fitness of things. It is the same with this wholesale man of whom I am speaking. By training, and possibly by nature, he is punctual, pays a debt on the tick of a watch when it is due; and it goes against the grain that others are not thus prompt.

One of the charges made was that the yard men when paying bills too often remit personal checks. "In a single case it does not amount to enough worth talking about, but take say twenty such checks a day, which cost from 20 to 40 cents each to collect, and it counts up," he said. The position was taken that it costs the yard man only a very small amount to buy a draft, often nothing at the bank where he does his business, and that it is by draft he should pay.

In my opinion the wholesale man is right. I do not believe it is good business form sending personal checks all over creation. If I owe you \$1—and it holds true if I owe you \$1,000—it seems to me that you are entitled to that amount, and when I pay you with a check that will cost you exchange to collect I am not doing my whole duty. I know it is done a good deal, but that has only to do with the custom—it does not affect the principle in the least.

Another complaint was that the time of payment which entitles the yard man to the discount is extended, and the discount deducted just the same. Now we all know there is no business in that. I know merchants who would pay the full bill instead of discounting it if the time ran twenty-four hours over the ten or thirty days, as the case might be. That is fulfilling the spirit of the contract. You say to me, "I will sell you these goods, cash sixty days, 2 percent off in thirty days." The thirty days pass and I do not remit. Maybe I want to use the money for five or ten days, and at the expiration of that time I deduct the discount and forward the balance. Don't you see my position is not entirely plumb? I have violated the contract. And many a

man in the various lines does this, thinking the matter is so small that the wholesale dealer will say nothing about it; but the wholesale dealer will keep up a-thinking, all the same. The point is here: We should do as we agree, no matter whether a few cents, or a million of them, are involved.

The wholesalers will get it in for us often enough; there are those who will take advantage of us in filling orders, but we must be square with them. And there is another point: Force them to be square with us. Live up to our contract, and make them live up to theirs. I am the friend of the righteous kicker. Sometimes it is impossible for us to get our rights without kicking. But let us bear in mind that the wholesale man is also justified in kicking when his rights are not respected.

TRICKS OF WHOLESALE MEN.

Do you know what right a wholesale dealer has to fill an order contrary to the letter of it? It would require a book like this in which to record all the cases of this kind which have been brought to my notice. It appeals to me that these wholesale men go on the principle that the yard men do not know what they want. It is similar to my ordering, say, a pair of pants from Chicago. I would measure the length of my legs, the big circumference of my waist, send the figures along and tell the tailor that I wanted a pair of all wool pants of those particular dimensions. Back they come—three-quarters cotton, the legs four inches too long and the waist so small that I have to lace them up in front with shoe strings. The tailor virtually says, "Old man, you don't know what you want; so I send these along and I believe you will be pleased with them!"

I would be tickled, wouldn't I? I would take particular pains to go around among my friends and say to them that this Chicago tailor was the best fellow who ever made pants

for me, and they would do well to order from him, wouldn't I? Not on your life, as they say in cultured circles. I would have a knife up my sleeve for that Chicago tailor. Don't you see that this is only an exaggerated statement of what is occurring in the lumber world every day?

Yesterday I saw a yard man who ordered a car of yellow pine, and it came stuffed to the tune of 2,000 feet. Poor fellow, of course he didn't know how much yellow pine he wanted. It was for the wholesale man to know that! He wrote the wholesale house and got a letter in return that made him as mad as a wet hen. Today I saw another yard man whose yellow pine order was stuffed 3,000 feet. In addition he was given grooved back flooring when flat back was ordered. "Flat back is worth \$1 more to me," he said. The car stood on track, and very likely the men who sold the lumber had to take it away. Soon after the orders for these cars were given yellow pine lumber declined in price \$2 or \$3. Pretty kettle of fish, wasn't it. Where were the next orders of these yard men placed?

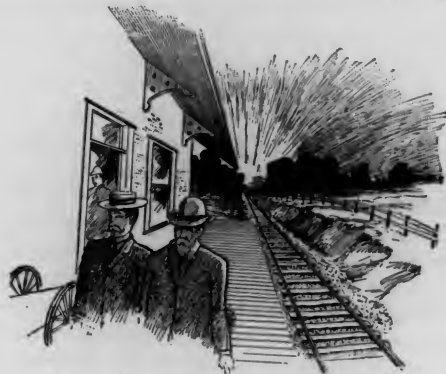
In contradistinction to this way of doing business I am going to tell one on a big Minneapolis company. Last week I saw a yard man who does contracting. I asked him where he bought his stock and he was gentleman enough to tell me. He said he bought it almost exclusively of this Minneapolis company. Last year he bought of the concern more than 100 cars. I am constantly putting foolish questions, and I asked this yard man why it was thus. "It is because I get what I want there," said he. "Gipson sees that I get it."

Possibly you know these people. I suppose in volume of business they are the leading lumbermen of the world today. Stoop shouldered, gray haired old men, who have worked their way up. So you might picture them, but you would be wrong. Young men, both of them. And how have these young men managed to place their feet on the topmost rung of the ladder? Capital? No! Capital can't do it, else there are scores of lumber concerns with their millions and millions who would have been there. These

young men please their customers; that is the secret of it. Those firms which are stuffing orders and who, by their distasteful business methods, are alienating the yard men would better put this recipe for success in their pipes and smoke it.

FORGETFULNESS IN CHARGING.

To paraphrase: To charge or not to charge, that is the question. Whether it is better to forget to charge and thus be out of our goods as clean as though a thief had taken them, or to charge and thus pursue a respected busi-



"We were promenading the platform."

ness career by keeping out of the sheriff's hands—this is a question which should occupy our minds.

The yard man who is growing gray in the service, and who has given particular attention to this question, regards it as folly for a lumberman, unless he has a thorough system, to assert that he omits putting nothing on his books. He instanced several cases when whole wagon loads of lumber went out scot-free.

He laughed at those people who believe they have "perfect" memories. He is of the opinion that the memory is

perfect when it works, but that, like all else that is of the earth, it is liable to lapse and slip cogs. At one time he bought his meat of a butcher who did a credit business and, prompted by his observation he said to this butcher that he believed a large part of his profits were lost by not charging meat that went out. The butcher turned up his big, fat nose at this. He would wait on a string of customers, and when there was a lull in trade he would go to the book and charge the items. He was firmly of the opinion that he missed nothing, relying as he did on that perfect memory of his. This yard man does not assume to guess or infer that as the credit business is ordinarily run the charging of many goods sold is neglected. He says he knows there is this neglect. So he kept tab on the butcher so far as his own trade with him was concerned, and the first week he got meat twice no record of which could be found on the butcher's books. "That would have knocked all the profit there was to the butcher in my trade for a week," said the yard man.

This man explained his method of billing orders. When selling a bill of lumber he makes a memorandum of every item wanted before a stick is loaded. If a customer says he wants two boards to patch up a hole in the shed he makes a memorandum of those two boards, and then asks what else is wanted. From this memorandum the items are checked as they are loaded—strictly so. If shingles and lime are on the memorandum they are not checked after the shingles and lime are on the wagon, but as soon as the shingles are thrown on that item is checked, and the same as to the lime. Then if it is a cash deal he simply scribbles "cash" on the slip; if it is to be charged it is so indicated, and the record is ready for the bookkeeper.

"This method has an additional advantage," said the yard man when we were promenading the platform, waiting for the train that would rid the town of me. "When all the items are before you on a slip like that you can load to better advantage. Instead of driving helter-skelter through

the yard, back and forth through the alleys, picking up an item here and there as the buyer thinks he may want it, you know just where to drive to get the items, one after the other. For instance, a man wants a few pieces of dimension and we throw it on. Then he wants a little siding and we drive around in the last alley and put that on. Then it occurs to the buyer that he wants some No. 4 boards, so back we come next to the dimension pile and load them. Even in loading it saves time, and time does not lack much of being money."

Then when I had gone aboard and found a seat in the crowded car the man with the goatee and heavy eyebrows who sat by my side went to talking politics. I try to be courteous, but I almost forget my bringing up when some slobmagullion of a politician goes to bumping arguments into me which have been going the rounds of the newspapers for a year, and doing it in a way that he would have a listener believe these arguments are original with him. It is then I want to stretch myself out and rest.

PERFECT BALANCES.

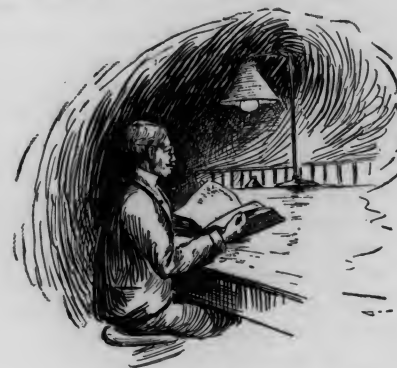
"I know from experience that I hope never to be obliged to repeat in this world, or the world to come, that bookkeeping is the measliest occupation that can be followed, at least by a mortal of my temperament and taste. I pity the bookkeeper wherever I see him. There is that dogged, over and over again, 2 and 2 are 4 business from morning till night, day in and day out. Of the two I would prefer digging ditches, for if doing that I could stick my spade in where I had a mind to, but when keeping books you are in the never ending rut from start to finish. Down in Texas I saw one of the neatest looking girls you ever saw at the books in a prosperous retail man's office, and if in the morning I had read she had eloped I would have called her a bully old gal!

A friend of mine who has a ledger in the largest wholesale

dry goods house in Chicago looked all night for 10 cents. Now, bookkeeping is an exact art—or science, if you have a mind to call it such—but there should be a grain of common sense yoked up with everything. I saw a nice appearing young fellow pegging away on the books in a retail lumber office—a fellow who on the surface was gentlemanly, intelligent and industrious. The boss was showing a man lumber in the yard, so this young man and myself did some chatting on our own account. We talked about the different systems of bookkeeping and incidentally he remarked that he was having some trouble with his trial balance. "The fact is," he said, "the average country business office is a hard place to work provided exact results are expected on the books. Mr. So-and-so here is liable at any time to take money from the drawer without making any minute of it, and then of course my work is unhinged. If I could handle all the money myself it would be different in this respect."

"Does he expect perfect balances?" I chipped in.

"He likes them pretty well," was the reply.



"Looked all night for 10 cents."

Under such conditions no ambitious bookkeeper could do the kind of work to suit him. The final result in bookkeeping is built up; it comes from a manipulation of many fac-

tors, and if one of those factors is at fault of course the result is also at fault. One careless man handling the cash will knock out the best bookkeeper who ever lived. I was in this office at closing up time and I noticed the bookkeeper was particular to ask both the boss and his son if they were sure they had put on the ticket all the money they had taken from the drawer. Both said they had. "Who paid for the load of hay that was taken to your house?" the bookkeeper asked.

"That is so; I didn't put that on the ticket," said the yard man.

If I remember rightly the amount was something over \$6. If the yard man had not been questioned he would have gone home and the bookkeeper might have put in extra time and worry in an endeavor to find out what had become of the money.

Said a yard man who has charge of his own books: "My books are liable to be out of balance all the time, for when settling with customers we often throw off a few cents. If a yard man insisted on his customers paying to a cent they would think he is small. That little bill that was just paid called for \$3.55. The man threw out \$3.50, as much as to say that ought to pay it, and I told him 'all right.' That may happen several times a day. These knock offs of odd cents amount to dollars every month."

It seems to me that if there is any nonsense under the sun it is to keep a well-meaning man working day and night on a set of books to find an amount so insignificant that it would cut no figure one way or the other—an amount that the average man would pay out for cigars or cocktails and never give it a second thought. There is such a thing as being merciful to our bookkeepers.

COGS WHICH DO NOT MESH.

There is not a week but my attention is called to some contention between the retail and wholesale dealers which, in my opinion, ought not to exist. I do wish there were no differences which would come between them. Trade friction is to be regretted. It is wasted power. It makes hard feelings and estranges those who would otherwise be at least business and possibly personal friends.

In a yard I recently saw a pile of posts and asked the yard man what he could do with posts of that size in a small town? I should say they would average about two inches. The reply was that he couldn't do much of anything with them; that if he got the chance he would be willing to sell them very cheap. Posts of this size will sell to some extent in a large town for holding up vines, building chicken pens and like purposes, but the farmer has no use for them. The farmer wants something big for his money. At times he will take a three-inch post, but he prefers a four-inch. The yard man told me that from a carload of alleged three-inch posts he assorted nearly 500 of these small ones. He objected to them, told the wholesale men of whom they were purchased how they had come out, and if they were not satisfied with his say-so to send on a man and inspect them. Hearing nothing satisfactory he made what he thought was a proper reduction in the bill and forwarded the draft. "They did not even acknowledge the receipt of the draft," said he.

The post men were mad—there can be little question as to that. Possibly they were as mad as hops, but they should not have cut the matter off so abruptly, it seems to me. They showed poor taste in doing that. These wholesale men may claim they were not aware the car was stuffed with so many small posts, and possibly they were not. The man who loaded them may have been the villain. I have heard this excuse offered time and time again—that there was some mistake in loading. These mistakes do occur, but

permit me to say that any employee in a wholesale yard who day after day stuffs cars does so with the knowledge of his employer. Put a pin in that. If a yard manager is instructed to send out straight goods he is going to do it, and if he is instructed that when he sees an opportunity he can manipulate grades he is going to do that. I have never known of an employee in a yard who would insist, against the wishes of the men who paid him his wages, in loading poorer lumber than the bill called for. Did you? I also want to ask you wholesale men, did you?

This filling of orders is a great point. I met a commission man who had a string of orders on his book, and he said he was going up north the next day to see about loading the lumber. "I attend to that part of the business myself," said he; and I thought he displayed a wise side of his nature. To return to cedar posts: If custom permits the running into a car of posts any certain percentage of smaller posts than were bought I wish the wholesale post men would make it known, for certainly anything of that kind is not understood by the retail yard men. I do not know how many of them I have heard kicking about the small posts they receive.

I like to get at the bottom of these things, so for my own satisfaction I looked up the standing of the yard man who had selected the small posts from the carload, and there is not a breath against him. He is rated as prompt pay and not as one of those few dealers who are in the habit of complaining about the quality of the stock he receives, or making reductions.

Not long ago a yard man told me he had received a car of red cedar shingles that he would not accept. We went through a bunch of them, and if ever there was an ungodly shingle that was it—narrow widths, cracks, ragged butts, and nearly every other defect that a shingle was ever known to have.

"I couldn't try to sell them to a customer," said the yard man.

"Would you accept such a shingle as that?" he asked me after we had looked them over.

"Not until the lower regions froze over," I told him.

Yet in the face of these incidents, and dozens of similar ones which could be cited, there are wholesale men who delight to tell what kickers the yard men are. I am prepared to tell my wholesale friends how they can stop much of this kicking—deliver the grade of goods they sell. The other kickers kick because they think they can make something by it. If I could join hands with the wholesale men and do these fellows up until they would squeal for mercy I would do it.

I wish these matters of dispute were out of the way. It makes us feel so comfortable when we can go through life as though the track were oiled for the occasion, and not strike boulders, and perhaps get junted into the ditch. I should like to see all retail and wholesale men friends. Somewhere out west there is a tent pitched, and under it tonight on a hunting trip will sleep a yard man and a wholesale dealer. I heard them when they put up the job. For years the yard man has bought lumber of the fellow who is now his tentmate. No doubt they have treated each other fair and square, else they would not be having a glorious outing together.

After all, that is the way to live. We cannot all go tenting together, but if the love of justice fills a corner of our hearts we will so conduct ourselves that those with whom we come in contact will wish they could tent with us, and that is the next thing to doing it. I wish more of us would nail up the golden rule in our offices, and having nailed it up march to the tune of it. It is a mighty good tune to march to.

DIFFERENT QUALIFICATIONS OF PARTNERS.

Have you ever tried to find the man who was rounded out at every point? If you made the effort you failed. All of us have our angles and shortcomings.

We lumbermen present all sorts of appearances. Not one of us is perfect in our line. When we find one man who is a good buyer, good salesman, good collector, good stockkeeper, all the rest are deficient in one or more of these directions. A man who had all sorts of fine theories about collecting showed an absolute misunderstanding of the market last fall and winter, and held off buying expecting that prices would break. The yard of one of the best salesmen I know looks as though the tail of a cyclone had switched it. I know a yard man whose bump of order is evidently the only bump there is on his head.

Wise men understand this condition of affairs. A partner in a Kansas firm remarked, "I thought it would be best to join forces. I do call myself a pretty good buyer, but John can sell lumber all around me. He knows everybody in this whole country." I warmed to him. I like the man who will own right up frankly that he doesn't know it all.

In this partnership business the bringing together of two distinct qualifications is desirable. Two good office men, or two good stockmen, do not fill the bill. I visited a concern that is well known in the section of the country in which it operates. By the mercantile agencies it is rated high, financially and otherwise. A man was working in the shed who was pointed out as one of the partners. I opened on the prospect of the wholesale lumber market, but evidently he was not bothered by the prospect. He had his coat and vest off, wore a shirt that cost maybe 48 cents, and his hands were like those of a man who works for a living. He was helping to load a wagon, and took right hold like a hired man. He knew all about the stock in the shed, and had opinions of his own as to the way stock should be

handled. He was up to his business from the yard end of it.

The other partner talked market prospects until you couldn't rest. He knew all about the low water in the Mississippi and the drouth out in the Dakotas. He had his ideas of bookkeeping and collecting. With building the shed and stocking it, he said he had nothing to do. He let his partner's end of the business alone, and his partner lets his alone. That, you see, makes a good team. Not long ago I was in an office and the two partners talked more than ten minutes over the buying of less than a half dozen doors. One would give his opinion and then the other would give his. They both acted as though they were afraid.

The impression meant to be conveyed in this little piece is that no retail lumberman need feel like cutting his throat if he is not a man of all around qualifications. We are apt to expect too much of a man who is in business for himself, and doing the most of the work himself. If you were in a great city and wanted a position that would bring you a big salary, if you posed as an all around man you would get nothing better to do than to tumble around boxes and barrels. If you should go into an office and declare you were an expert salesman, an expert buyer, an expert accountant, an expert stockman, they would ask the porter to show the crazy man out! You would fail to find a big business man who would think for a minute that one mortal could be all that.

Therefore, if we are deficient in one direction, let us thank the Lord that we are not deficient in all, and keep right on sawing wood.

FARMER YARDS.

The farmer yard is an eyesore to the other dealers who do business in its territory. They object to the methods pursued. It would be as reasonable to expect a healthy condition of trade without profit as it would to sustain a healthy body without food. In trade, profit is the food. In other regards we must not of course be so un-American as to forget that a combination of farmers has the same right to sell lumber that we would have to go to farming. If we do not look out we become small in these things. Man should keep growing and growing until he is a very behemoth. But these yard men think they have a right to object to methods which demoralize trade for a dozen towns around.

In common with the rest of us, the farmer is a queer duck. In order that the cost of goods may be reduced to the consumer his cry is down with the middle man! Yet we must say that when he becomes the middle man himself he stands by the principle he has advocated, and sells goods at a small, or no, profit. If consistency is a jewel he is one in this connection. I have known several farmers who would get to thinking that they were born to be merchants, sell their farms, move into town to handle groceries, dry goods, clothing, and in a few years, having paid dear for their change, would go out of town again and resume their old calling. It is bosh for any man to entertain an idea that he can do well a thing which he has not learned to do.

Herein lies the farmer's inconsistency; he would rejoice to get \$3 a bushel for his wheat or corn—seeing nothing in that price touching extortion—but when he settles down to sell lumber he professes to think he is a highwayman if he makes a profit to exceed 50 cents a thousand.

I know of only one farmer yard that is well managed. There may be others, but I have never run across them. And really what could a competent manager do if he was

commanded by a hundred inexperienced stockholders? These yards as a rule are not long lived. Dissension creeps in and, as the poet says, like a canker it gnaws at the core. These yards are a thorn in the side, but only for a little while.

In southern Iowa there was a farmer who envied the yard men the snap they are having. He could sell lumber as well as any of them, he thought, and he proposed to do it



"Professes to think he is a highwayman."

in style, so he built a large shed, underpinned it with stone and then his troubles began. With imperfect ventilation the lumber became damaged. Then a gentle prairie breeze came that way and the shed was so flimsily built that the breeze played with it as with a toy, and when it had gone on to raise Cain elsewhere it cost nearly as much to make the shed sound again as it did originally to build it. This man, however, started in with the intention of being a genuine lumberman, and I trust that his troubles are ended. But he has learned that he couldn't jump from a stock pasture into a lumber yard and succeed in a day.

STANDING IN WITH CONTRACTORS.

More and more I see how important it is that the different branches of the lumber industry should work together like cog wheels. For years I have been trying to induce the retail and wholesale dealers to lie down in the same pasture like so many lambs, and I would also that the yard men and contractors be on good terms. Of course, we all know that the average contractor is not worth the powder to blow him over the fence. Why so many irresponsible men should be building houses is past my comprehension. There are yard men by the hundreds who want nothing to do with a contractor, though at the same time it is not an easy job to dispense with him. When speaking in this way do not understand me as including all contractors. There is here and there one who is all right. To get along with him is easy. But how about the others? They are tough, but can't you stand in with some of them to advantage?

The average contractor doesn't care how many rows he has with a yard man. As a rule he has nothing to lose, and very often he can kick up a good sized dust storm. I know a yard man who got at outs with a contractor, and then this contractor went to shipping in from a Chicago poacher. In addition, he told every prospective builder he could get to listen to him how much money could be saved in buying away from home, and to prove it he would pull out a list and read off the prices. He had it in for the yard man and injured his trade every way he possibly could.

I knew another contractor who had a quarrel with a yard man and said he would start a yard of his own. The yard man thought it was idle talk. The contractor had no money, but I should like to see a determined man who could not put in a stock of lumber on that account. At first the stock was small. As a yard his would not have been recognized by any retail association. But it grew. No man but has his friends. The ghost of Benedict Arnold could sell lumber in any community if it could put in a yard.

We sometimes think we are the favorite in our community, and all such nonsense, but we would better club the idea out of our heads. The buying community doesn't care the snap of its finger who gets its money if only good value is returned for it. As component parts of the community you and I size up about with the same number of other component parts. Today this man who put in a carload of lumber through spite is a legitimate dealer, and has as much as 500,000 feet of lumber in pile. I do not think he does any contracting now. He has been graduated from the building business and is evidently making money.

A yard man was recently telling me how much flint plaster he sells. Not long ago a contracting mason did a big share of the plaster business of the town. The yard man induced this mason to join forces, and now he gives him \$1 a ton commission on all he can sell. The mason was not a business man. Ordering and remitting for plaster was out of his line, so now when he gets rid of all of that bother and gets his clean \$1 a ton for all that he uses in his jobs, or sells to other masons, he is satisfied. "Too, he helps me work off a good deal of plaster that becomes a little stale," the yard man said with a show of satisfaction. There is as many as one of you who would be glad to have somebody help you to work off your old plaster, isn't there?

"There are also several carpenters working for me," said this same yard man, "and first and last they throw a good many bills my way."

"But blank 'em, no dependence can be placed on 'em," a dealer remarked.

Isn't it a good thing to know that in advance? We should handle men as we do horses. Not long ago a yard man took me out behind a fine black horse to see the town. He told what a reliable horse it was, saying that his wife and children could drive him anywhere. He hitched him to go into another yard and no sooner were we inside the office than a locomotive came puffing around the curve. I suggested to the yard man that he would better look out for his

horse. "O, he will stand hitched anywhere," was the reply. There are men of that kind; they are so gentle that anybody can drive them, and they would stand hitched if the heavens were falling. Then there are others who will kick over the traces and stand hitched nowhere. If you took out a frisky, ugly horse, how would you drive him? With kind words, a tight rein, and every minute on the lookout for him, wouldn't you? That is the way the frisky contractor should be handled—kindly, and with a tight rein. If we handle him in the right way he will help us along.

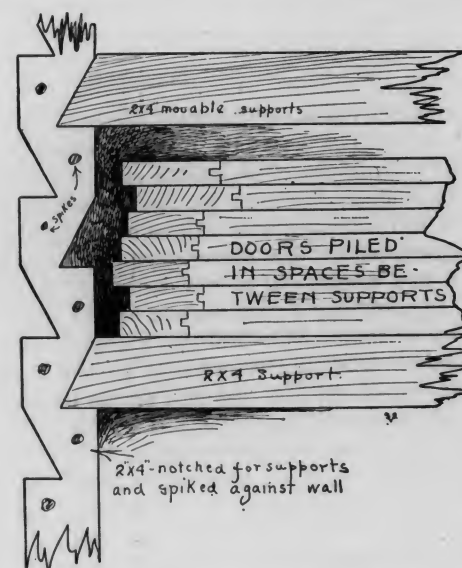
A HANDY DOOR RACK.

The consensus of opinion is that stock doors should be kept in pile—a way of storing them that has several advantages. It saves room. It prevents the doors from warping. It keeps them clean. With a light frame covered with paper and laid on the top door a pile of doors is protected about as well as it can be. I do not remember having heard more than one yard man say that standing doors on end is preferable to laying them flat in a pile, and I think he was prejudiced. Piling them flat is the method adopted by the most of the wholesale sash and door houses I have visited. Some of these wholesale houses have racks and some have not. Those that have not use the floor as a piling ground. The last named method, however, is a room consumer unless a very large stock is carried, as in order to get easily at the different grades and sizes of doors each must be in a separate pile. When racks are used, in some houses several doors of the various kinds are placed in them and immediate orders filled from the racks, while the bulk of the doors are piled in a less conspicuous place on the floor.

From the accompanying cut any yard man is no doubt mechanic enough to make a rack that will serve his purpose admirably. There is nothing original in the idea, as the same principle may be seen in almost any bookcase. The

pieces in which the notches are cut are 2x4 dimension, as are also the rails which reach from notch to notch. This 2x4 notched piece is nailed against a board so that the rail may more readily stay in place. The perfect adjustability of the rack is one of its prominent features.

There are probably not many sash racks in the country. I have seen but one that was made in a workmanlike way.



"Well suited to a yard storeroom."

The breakage in a wareroom led to the building of this one. "I concluded it was poor business to pay my money for sash and then occasionally have a light knocked out after it came in here," said the yard man. "I used to think it senseless when one of the boys would break a light, but one day when I was reaching over a pile of sash and stuck my toe through a light I concluded I was as much of a tumble

heels as any of 'em. When laying sash around in any old way in a crowded wareroom more or less lights are bound to be broken. Something is shoved against them or dropped upon them. Since three years ago, when I made this rack, which cost maybe \$1.50 and a few hours' time, there has not been a broken light of glass on the premises. In addition, the sash, graded as to size, are right there in rows, and at a glance I can tell what I have got."

THE GLORIOUS FOURTH.

Let us not be too big, nor feel too big, to fill up on fire crackers, and for one day in the year let the neighborhood know that we still live. Prod the old eagle and make him scream his loudest. We must not forget the boys, either, for the Fourth is their day as well as ours. We have all got a mortgage on it. The man who on circus day, or the Fourth of July, forgets that he was once a boy has become ossified. It would take but 25 cents to make a king of the poorest boy in town. If he had that amount to invest in noise material it would not be necessary for him to trail on behind the rest of the boys and pick up the leavings, but he could go ahead as independent as a lord and shoot his own crackers. If we only know how to do it we needn't beggar ourselves to make a good many people happy.

This morning a tramp came to our door and asked for something to eat. You know how growing boys and tramps will clean off a table; but we raked up enough oat meal, toast and tea to fill this fellow up. Then I asked him if he smoked, and he said he did occasionally. No doubt he thought I was going to give him a lecture on his habits and tell him that he now saw what they had brought him to, but I pulled out the biggest cigar I could find on the premises, and when he had placed it between his lips I lighted a match and held it to the end of it. At that instant he was not a tramp—you could see it in his face that he

wasn't—but he was the equal of a man who wore diamonds, and who was the owner of the old black cow that was grazing out in the back lot. He went out of the yard and down the street with head up, and I felt just as good over it as though I had entertained King Edward.

As your hair gets silvered and the wrinkles settle in the back of your neck, does it come to you that there is less difference in men than you used to think there was? When we were young and big headed and used hair oil we thought we were very exclusive. But we are all built on the same grand foundation, and you know how it is when we have a fine location and a miserable building—some day down comes the building and up goes a better one. I suppose that by and by all of us—tramps as well as the rest—will be so ashamed of the miserable way we have built on our glorious possibilities that we will tear down and build again, and as our gratitude and appreciation increase we will keep tearing down and rebuilding until the dome on the mighty structure of character will reach the heavens. Taking this view of it, every one of us ought to be thankful that we were born; aye, even though we be tramps.

If we could get through the Fourth without the regulation oration, following the activities of the day, we would have the nightmare lighter. On the morning of the Fourth the regulation oration should be run into the cooler for the day to keep it out of mischief. To hear a one-hoss lawyer inform us that our forefathers landed on Plymouth Rock, and then proceed to discuss expansion, is enough to drive a man to beer.

FROM COUNTRY TO CITY.

Occasionally a yard man talks of the great advantages enjoyed by the retail dealers in the large towns. They are not aware that such talk is about as senseless as it is for a dog to bay at the moon, but it really is. Having mixed with all kinds it seems to me that by a big majority the

yard man who has a fair trade in a country town is the best off of any of them. He may not be getting rich at a galloping gait, but often he is getting rich fast enough. I could name these yard men by the score who are not only doing a good lumber trade but have a finger in nearly all the other pies in the town. They own farms, interests in banks, mercantile houses, and are literally living in clover. Their wives are not giving pink teas and indulging in other similar social silliness, but it is all the better for them that they



"Milk my old black cow."

are not. All of us are foolish enough for all practical purposes, but in this respect the city folks lead us country Jakes two to one. Now in about ten minutes, instead of scrubbing up to attend some old Moneybag's reception over on the boulevard, I shall swing the milk pail on my arm and go out and milk my old black cow. When I come in the children will gather around the table, drink so much milk they will protrude like aldermen, go to bed and snore like so many pigs, and get up in the morning ready to eat a piece of steak as big as a shovel. That is the way to live—get right down to nature. Revel among the trees, gardens, grass and flowers, and if dust and mosquitoes are thrown into the bargain pay no attention to them.

But it is ever the way of man that he is sneaking off after strange gods. He wants sanitary plumbing, nose-in-the-air social functions, no one to peep in at the door when he is sick, and hired men to ride in the procession, so as to

make a show, when he is dead. That is the way they live in cities. They all think they are high cockalorum, but nine-tenths of them are not even low cockalorum. They are so deeply veneered with the artificial that if one of the big sash and door making concerns should go on only one street in Chicago and strip the veneer off the people it would get a stock sufficient to make more veneered doors than it will turn out in a year.

I was in Chicago a while ago and got there just as the great crowd was going home from work for the day. There were men, women, girls and boys crowding along the sidewalk, and most of them going to suppers that the poorest man in the country would call mighty thin grub. Humanity streamed along and there was not a face in the thousands that I knew. I thought, "If I were home even my dog would know me, and wag his tail, glad to see me." Then when I had gone to bed at the hotel I didn't go to sleep for three hours, afraid I had blown out the gas and would wake up and find myself dead. In the city churches they use contribution plates. They can see everything you put on, and if you don't come down handsomely you are spotted, while out here with us, where butterfly catchers are used, a penny, or even a pants button if you feel poor, makes considerable of a jingle.

Notwithstanding all these advantages of small over large towns it really pains me to hear my friends, the successful yard men around the country, now and then pining for the city. If they were to go there and get mixed up with the competition, not knowing from one month to another whether they would make enough money to pay their yard rent, they would worry the fat from their bones and become such walking skeletons that the museum managers would lasso them, drag them in and exhibit them at a dime a head. Yet the other day a man who owns his home, yard, stock, a piano, a happy wife and three children, asked me what I thought the chances would be if he should go to a certain large town and open a retail yard. I do not suppose he was

pleased with the answer, but I was moved to say that in all probability in less than six months there would not be enough of him left for his name to cling to.

HOW THE POOR SWEDE BIT.

It was a pretty hot time in the old town according to the story of the yard man. He pointed over to the place where he said at that time his competitor was located, but there is no competitor there now.

"This man was selling dimension for \$14," said he, "and I did not want to meet that price unless I was positively obliged to. One day a Swede came to my place, and of course the first information he gave me was that he could buy dimension at the other yard for \$14. Then I had to do something. I told him in a manner that he would think I was doing something big that I would sell him 2x4 dimension for 1 cent a foot, 2x6 for 1½ cents, and 2x8 for 2 cents. I tried also to make it plain to him that when he bought dimension on that basis he could figure it up for himself and know just what he was doing. All he had to do was to measure off the feet and he would have it. The proposition struck him favorably. He not only bought his supply of me but he spread the good news among his neighbors and several of them came and wanted some of that cent-a-foot dimension. It looked cheap to them. Of course the dimension sold in this manner brought me \$15 a thousand."

This yard man is still an advocate of selling by the piece to some extent. "Jim, let me take your book," he said to his man. It was a little book that fitted the vest pocket in which had been written the leading items in the yard, with the price carried out per piece.

"It isn't every man who works in the yard who can readily figure how much a few boards come to at so much a thousand," he said, "but when he has such a list as this

by him he can sell stuff, so far as the price is concerned, as easily as anybody and, what is as good, he gets better prices for the most of it when he sells by the piece than I do when I sell by the thousand."

When I said goodbye to this dealer at the station I did not say to him it would be time spent in vain ever to look for him down stream, but that thought was in my head.

MORE OR FEWER YARDS.

A yard man writes from Minnesota, saying that in his opinion I am wrong in the prophecy that there will be an increased number of yards. He thinks that the reverse will be true; that many of the yards which are now "hanging on by the skin of the teeth will let go." Well, possibly. I do not claim to be the law and gospel in the matter. No doubt there are plenty of others who can see as far into a stone quarry as I can. It seems reasonable to me, however, that the more people the more goods in every line are sold, and, ordinary conditions ruling, the more people there are to sell the goods. I should like to take the short end of a wager of about 4 cents that I can name 200 towns in every one of which a new yard will go in before one will drop out. Yards are not dropping out to any alarming extent. A yard man may get weary in well doing and conclude it would be better for him to stop swapping new dollars for old ones, but it is a rare occurrence for his yard to go out of existence. Somebody is ready to step in and take hold of it. It is a common trait of human nature that we think we can succeed where others may fail. We think that the other fellow did not treat his customers as he should have done, that he did not carry the right kind of stock, and possibly that he was not any great shake of a man anyhow. We would improve on his methods at every turn—of course we would!

There seems to be a sort of mania for owning lumber

yards. The other day a man who ran a laundry told me that he was anxious to get into the retail lumber business. He asked me questions for half an hour—how much capital would be required, the present price of lumber at wholesale, about the lien law, and so on. He knew nothing about the business, but he had kept his eyes open and had arrived at the conclusion there is none better. I think his laundry had not proved a bonanza. Some man who had worked in a yard had proposed to go in with him, and they will probably hitch up together and buy or put in a yard at some point.

There are hundreds of yard men who have had their eye teeth cut, and who are not going to spread out more unless the opportunity suits them. No doubt this Minnesota man is one of that kind. But you know everybody is not of that stamp. There is no truer saying than "there are others." It was not a week ago that a man said to me that in his opinion the dealers in a three-yard town were "just holding up the people," and he thought if a man would start a yard and sell at the right figures he would do well. This man would call it doing well if he made \$500 a year, as on that amount he and his wife could live comfortably. Now, if some man who had worked in a yard should come along, give this other man a little taffy and offer to go in with him and manage the business, in the yard would go. The man who imagines that the dealers are getting exorbitant prices, has quite a wad of money, is doing nothing and would like to serve his country in some such way as running a lumber yard and selling at "right prices." And you have probably learned that almost without number there are men of little experience who are ready to link themselves with other men's capital.

Thus the tendency is in every direction, and there is only one thing that any of us can do about it, and that is to take it as it comes. It does away with many a disappointment when we have reached a point that we can take things as they come; do our best and then face the consequences like little men.

I am no believer that because a town has apparently yards enough no other dealer has a right to locate there. If he has no such right the Declaration of Independence is a lie. This is a great and free country, and you, I, everybody, should be accorded the right to make an effort to live in any town at any legitimate business. The new comer may get his foot in it clear to the knee, or he may win out. Men are more than lumber yards. The determined, upright, courteous dealer will generally succeed, but the man who lacks these qualities has a millstone around his neck. I could name dealers who could go into any town and success-



"Independent as a whole herd of hogs."

fully buck the whole shooting match. There are those who are doing it right along. I have in mind now a man who opened a yard in a pretty warm town, and it was predicted he would fall as flat as a pancake. Having been in business a year he opened his books to me, and the result showed \$8,000 profit. This man knows his business from a to z. He is neither to be fooled nor fooled with. He is as independent as a whole herd of hogs and as obliging as he is

independent. You can't easily down a man of that stamp. He will pick the fruit of success from the tree of life up higher on the limbs than the common mortal can reach.

THE PRUDENT SCHEMER.

We must admire a resourceful man. His boat will gayly ride the rapids of life when the ordinary craft will get tumbled upside down. Not one of us, of course, means a resourceful man in an illegitimate way. There are people who will deceive and call it resource; but that kind does not pay. When a man comes to us as a customer, is willing to pay his money in return for our goods, he is every time entitled to honorable treatment. The money is what we want—it is what we hang out our sign for—and the man who assists us to it is certainly doing us a favor. A yard man was telling me that his predecessor sold a lot of D stock for C. When the builder had hauled the lumber home his carpenter told him he did not get the grade for which he had bargained, and when looking it over they found D plainly marked on one or more of the boards. The average decent retailer would feel like crawling into a rathole when confronted with such a piece of deception as that.

Here are points to illustrate the right kind of scheming: I was in an office where a man wanted an 18-inch board for a certain purpose. When informed that he could not get it of the quality desired he shook his head, and started away. The yard man put in a claim, however. He told him that for the use to which the board was to be put two 9-inch, or better still, three 6-inch boards would be an improvement. The man, with his hand on the knob of the door, hesitated a minute, and then said he would take the narrow boards. This ability to substitute is a valuable one for the lumber salesman. To be sure, this particular sale amounted to only about 60 cents, but the valuable point was that the man was kept at the yard. One of our famous retail

dry goods men remarked that if a lady wanted only a yard of three-cent ribbon he did not want her to leave his store without having an opportunity to buy just what suited her. If some of us two-for-a-cent fellows would be to the infinite pains to build up a trade that the big guns have been we needn't be two-for-a-cent men all our lives. Don't you think so?

In a yard I saw a lot of oddly worked stuff and the yard man said it was some he got for a Catholic institution in the place. "They wanted a ceiling for a long porch," he explained, "and at the same time they desired that the ceiling



"Go to Africa to do missionary work."

should act as roofing, so I had the stuff worked beaded ceiling on one side and grooved roofing on the other." I call that the right kind of resource. There are yard men who say, "Sell people what they want;" which, in my opinion, is a bad doctrine, for half the time people do not know what they want. I believe it holds true that the yard man who has thoroughly learned his business and is alive to holding his trade can advise and influence to their benefit one-half of the customers who come to his offices. I have heard good yard men put this as high as 75 percent. You will thus observe that you need not necessarily go to Africa to do missionary work.

The yard man should not assume that the customer who

comes into his office knows anything, and at the same time it is best if possible to lead him to think that he knows it all. There is no man to whom we will pay homage so readily as to him who thinks we are wise or great. At first thought we might say that we common people bow to greatness, but I think about the size of it is that greatness often bows to us. The fact is that greatness, so called, is so dependent upon the people for its standing that it trembles lest we stand from under and it take a fall.

But as I was going to say, I wear socks, except in warm weather when I go barefooted, and not long ago I found I had run out of them. Ordinarily my best girl buys my socks, shirts, neckties etc. and I would rather she would be an expert in selecting these goods than to go storming up and down the country asking to be permitted to vote and become a man among men. I like a man first rate, but on general principles I like a woman better, and I rather like to see them in their respective spheres. If a man should consider it his duty to buy home supplies, tend babies, fight moths in the household, and tell me when it is time to go and get shaved, I should object. These delicate duties belong to women, and women only. It follows that if I want to prevent men from breaking in and doing this work I don't want to see woman break in on man's preserves. That is the way I think tonight, but maybe it will not last long. The man is of little account who sets down his foot and says, I will think thus so and so, forever and aye. When we take that position we are talking like fools, for our mental as well as our physical body is constantly changing.

Regarding those socks, the dealer led me from box to box as easily as though he had a string tied to my ear, and when my best girl came home she said I did first rate as a shopper—that she was proud of me. That increased my respect for the dry goods man. I rather fancied a blue and yellow stripe, so that when I pulled up my pants legs it would be so loud as to attract the attention of the populace,

but the merchant led me away from them, and now I see it was for my good.

When we influence a man, and he finds that we were unselfish in the matter and were really trying to do him a good turn, that man is very liable to come our way again. If that dry goods man had socked it to me on the socks, to speak euphoniously, I should have avoided him. My best girl at my request would have been so kind as to buy her duds at the other corner store. I don't believe we half know how well it pays us when we do a decent act. And I don't believe we know how easily people see through us when we are not disposed to be decent. We don't turn these propositions over in our mind half often enough.

I was sitting in an office when a man stepped in and inquired about shingles. "Yes," said the yard man, "I have a good white pine and a good white cedar."

"No red cedars?"

"None on hand just now, but either of the kinds named would make a better roof than red cedar."

About this time I could see there was something the matter with the prospective buyer. Then he spoke up like a little man and informed the yard man that when he bought red cedars for his horse barn last summer this same yard man told him they were the best shingle in the market, and he wanted more of them. The yard man wiggled about a little and I really pitied him. You see, he had forgotten to stay by his story. The man didn't buy either the white pine or white cedar, and who could blame him? No man delights in being made a monkey of.

One of the finest sights in the world is the man who walks head up, because he is entitled to for the reason that it is his intention to treat every human being white. It is a dirty conscience that rubs a fellow's nose in the mud. It takes a mighty smart mean man to avoid getting his foot into a trap of his own setting. His trap is oftener

than otherwise a boomerang that whirls around and around and knocks his own head off. We are not all actors, and often people can look through us as though we were glass.

WHERE CARELESSNESS MAY SUCCEED.

There is no soft spot in my heart for the slovenly lumberman, as a lumberman, but if such he be he can feed his soul on the reflection that he is in the business where he can succeed better than in any other line. I know a man whose yard, in polite language, looks like thunder the year around. He does not seem to care in what shape his piles are, and whether the ends of them are even or not is of no consequence. A pile of dimension looked as though a green boy had thrown it together. Let me say to his credit, however, that he has a good office. You have never seen a man yet so bad that you couldn't find a white spot in him if you looked for it. There are those who, in their minds, will have us done up quickly and thoroughly when the time comes, but it does seem to me that this white spot will act as seed. And let us all hope that from it we may grow up better beings than we are now. I don't care how good we may call ourselves, there will be plenty of room for improvement.

If the merchant in any other line should keep his goods in no better shape than this lumberman does you know what the result would be. Much of his stock would spoil on his hands. The goods would get dirty, eaten by rats, moths, and his tidy customers would go elsewhere to buy. We all know that this would be the outcome. Yet, while this man's lumber has sprawled around, shingles and lath always in place to be kicked out of the way, he has made money. He owns his yard and stock and has built a good house which I suppose his wife keeps in better order than he keeps his yard, for that is the way it goes—like and unlike oftener than otherwise come together.

I trust this little screed may be no excuse for the indolent and slovenly to go into the retail lumber business, but if they feel their life depends on it the business will use them better than the millinery business would. If they have any pride—and we all have—they may occasionally feel ashamed, but all the same their lumber will be wanted, and there will be farmers who would probably think it dudish to keep the piles of lumber too slick, and who will come in the office and spit on the floor should there be no other handy place.

THE CONTRACTOR AS A FACTOR.

I have met several contractors of late. A contractor who knows his business, when he has nothing else to do hangs around the lumber offices during the cold and stormy weather. He can there learn the drift of lumber prices, and hear of proposed building, especially by farmers. Not long ago I saw a yard man hand a contractor a lumber list, evidently received recently. The contractor hastily looked it over and handed it back. This gave me a cue and after the builder had gone I incidentally wrung into the conversation something about the relation which should exist between the yard man and contractor, and the former pounced on to the question just as I wished he would. You know, occasionally, things go our way—and then again they don't.

"This is the position I take," said the retail man. "The contractor and retail lumberman are very closely allied in business matters. There should be no friction between them. Now, take that man who went out of here a little while ago. He is a good builder and 'onto' his job in every way. For me to make much money out of that man is impossible. At the same time I want his friendship and influence. If he cannot buy lumber at home to suit him he will have it shipped in. He is as good as the wheat, consequently I say to him, 'Here, order what you want through me and pay me a little something for my work.' We have never had a

misunderstanding. Every invoice is open to him, and all about cash discounts he understands as well as I do. Yes, it is working cheap, but in a case like that I had rather work cheap than not at all.

"Now, understand I draw the line right on men of this stamp. Take your average flip-flap carpenter and you are better off to let him alone. I enter into no such arrangement with them. Last week a carpenter took a job of adding a kitchen to a house out on the edge of town and came in my place to price the stuff. He seemed to think that because he had blossomed out as a contractor he was entitled to all sorts of discounts. I couldn't see it in that light. He isn't worth a cent himself and the house he is going to fix up is mortgaged for all it is worth. He didn't come back, and I didn't cry over it."

"Who is your best customer?" I ventured to ask this man.

"The farmer ten days in the week," was the reply. "He is sometimes slow to pay but it is not necessary to lose any sleep over the account. And then, blessed be his name, he doesn't know a No. 4 board from C finish!"

It seems to me the view this yard man took of the contractor is a sensible one. Few contractors are going to order lumber from some scalper if they can do as well at home. I know builders who ship in their material, and in my opinion the yard men in those towns should see that it is stopped. A compromise should be made, if possible. The influence of a builder unloading a car of stuff on the side track is not a healthy one for the yard man. I would rather the car would come through my yard if I didn't make out of it more than enough to buy a good cigar. A farmer may see the builder unloading the car and say to himself, "If he can buy lumber and make money by shipping it in, maybe I can;" so when he builds a barn in he ships it. You see, it is a bad influence which, like a wave, keeps spreading and spreading, and we don't know where it will end.

DISADVANTAGES OF SMALL STOCK ROOMS.

Our stock rooms are no doubt too small. Not long ago I was in a new shed that cost several hundred dollars, with the stock room immediately in the rear of the office. It was small, dark, and you know what accompanies such conditions—dirt always. If there had been a bushel of rats in there no one without a lantern could have seen them. They could live and breed unmolested. It could not be swept, and really there was no vacant floor room to sweep. The yard manager wanted a sash from the room and he went in, tumbled things over, brought a sash out to the light and found it was not the desired size.

"Isn't very light in there, is it?" was asked.

"Blank it," was the reply, "I don't know why any man should build such a stock room as that."

The yard was one of a line, therefore he felt at liberty to free his mind. When the old man is a hundred miles away we can talk, you know.

There are scores of such rooms, and there are successful lumbermen who build them, too. Your best arranged premises and the biggest trade do not always go together. There are yard men who are doing a large business but who never think of doing it conveniently or comfortably. They make two motions when one would answer the purpose if they were so fixed that the motion would count. I saw scales the other day as many as twenty feet from the office front. It was a drizzly afternoon, and three times while I sat there the yard man turned up his coat collar and went out to take the weight of wagons. This man said he had been in business there for eight years, and of course as he had scales in when he opened up all of these eight years he had been running out through rain and snow to do his weighing. No doubt he has whipped the rain from his hat and kicked the snow from his feet a hundred times, yet there the scales remain. Moreover, he has got along in business fairly well—we may say first rate. Any rating book will probably put

him down at \$10,000. It is easy enough to ask: "Why does he not put his scales where they ought to be, so that he can stand by the front window of his office and manipulate the lever and weights?" It is dead easy to answer the question, too. He has never had an eye to the conveniences of doing business. We all know men who are slouchy in their dress, who spill soup over the front of their vest and coat every time they eat, and let it remain there. These men never reform. You could not reform them if you should try. Their wives have failed to reform them. Their manners in this respect are due to their makeup. I am not chiding them—let them spill soup on their clothes if they want to. I don't know as it is very sensible to single out these men in this connection, either, for the most of us have some measly little habit that ought to be pounded out of us with a club, but these men are cited to illustrate that it seems to be impossible for all men to have an eye out for those little matters which will help them along in business.

My idea of a stock room is that it should be large and light. It does not cost much to make it so. The difference in dollars and cents would neither break nor make a man. And see what an advantage such a room would be. Your doors could then be displayed. I was in an office when a lady came in and inquired for a front door. The yard man led the way to the stock room, and having nothing else to do I sauntered along behind. The yard man had only one blessed door that was in shape to be seen. All the others were still bundled up. He got a saw and hammer and pounded away, the lady during the process standing as far away as she could and pulling her skirts around her as you have seen your wife do when she thought there was a mouse around. Finally the door was set alongside the other one. "Are these all you have?" the lady asked.

"No," said the yard man, "I have got another one here somewhere." Then he wrestled with several bundles of sash to get at another door. I thought, standing there: "It is a pity." Now what if the lady had been ushered into a

clean, large, light room, with doors of every kind in stock arranged in a row for her inspection? Don't you think she would have left that yard with a better impression than she did? Yet we can guess what this particular yard man might say about it. Maybe he would answer us: "Damn her impression! I sold her the door!"

But, beloved, any business man who takes that position is on the wrong track. The impression you have of me is the reason you like or dislike me. Impressions are the father



"She thought there was a mouse around."

of likes and dislikes. Not a month ago I visited a yard and the impression I formed of the yard man was the reason I picked up my little grip and went to a yard up the street. This man is all right in his way—a good enough man probably—but he was a little lofty in the head, and I was of the opinion that elsewhere I might find more agreeable company. When you can strike a good fellow life is too short to put in your time with the others. You don't have to do it, so what is the sense of it?

We should be careful as to the impression we make. It is a larger part of his capital in business than many a man is aware. You have been told of a yard man who, when he built a shed, fixed up a stock room with special reference to the convenience of the ladies. His yard is in the center of a good sized town, is visited by many lady customers, and he thought he would try to keep their trade by pleasing them. He argued that when they went to shop for dry goods, groceries, shoes or bonnets they found the goods displayed for sale, with seats for them to sit on and rest if they felt so inclined, and he asked himself why his place should be an exception. They can visit his stock room as they can visit stores, and carry away the impression with them that it was a comfortable place to trade. This man does no carpenter work when the ladies are there making their selections. Any time a day they may come in everything is in order. This pleases the ladies, and without a doubt the men as well. We coarse creatures can put up with many a thing that would grind on the sensibilities and good taste of the ladies, but none of us has ever been heard to object to a system in a business place that will save us time.

A PESSIMISTIC LUMBER SELLER.

Somehow I cannot fancy a rank pessimist any more than I can a rattle-brained optimist. While we are here on earth our place is neither underground nor in the sky. Live your life while you are living it, is what I try to teach my children. We know less about the life to come than we do about this one; therefore let us pay proper attention to this one while we are about it. Furthermore, let us love it while we are living it.

A few weeks ago I ran up against a yard man who was one of the worst pessimists I had ever met. I could not conclude what kind of metal he was molded from. Ordinarily the pessimist is disappointed and sour. His liver

is out of order and he looks through green-eyed goggles. You know the loaves of bread our best girls make sometimes get sour and will not rise. It is so with the pessimist. He gets sour and won't rise and, like sour bread, becomes soggy and soggy. I could not understand, however, why this man should have occasion to eject all the yeast-like quality from his nature. Financially he certainly has succeeded. Mentally he is as bright as the most of us. Incidentally he told me he belonged to a church, and it was on my tongue's end to ask him what business he had in a church where there should be hope and praise, with his inclinations dragging along on the floor where his feet



"He belonged to a church."

are—but of course I didn't. You know how many things we would like to do and say but through policy or cowardice do not do or say them. After all, with the most of us policy is the most powerful engine that propels our actions. It makes me half ashamed of myself and my kind when I say it, but it is so.

When talking about trade and his determination to use the people right in the matter of dealing he explained how ungrateful the public is. "You get no thanks for what you do," he said. Then he appealed to me in the following manner: "I have read the paper with which you have been

connected for years; during all those years you have been saying good things about the lumbermen of the country, and I want to ask you how many of them have even said, 'thank you' for it."

I told him I did not look at it in that light. When I mentioned a man I did it as a duty, and often not knowing nor caring whether he would see the mention or not. He is treated as a piece of news the same as a saw mill or lumber yard would be, and I expected no thanks from him. In fact, that on several occasions during my uneventful career I had made mention of men in a way that if they could have given either thanks or a club over the head it would have been the club. "There you are, a prominent man in the trade," said I. "If you should die tonight you would be worth a half column obituary notice, and I should be thankful you helped me along to that extent." He scowled as though he had an inward pain.

You see this yard man is on the wrong track entirely. It is not improbable that customers who had been given low prices had gone elsewhere for their next bills, or that neighbors whose business he thought he was entitled to had shipped in lumber from the poachers who make so many of our yard men swear. But all the same he is on the wrong track. He has offered his lumber for sale, and in return for it every dollar which has been paid to him was a thanks. These dollars have enabled him to live in his own house and own his yard and stock. For these things he should be extremely thankful. I can't snuggle up to the everlasting grumbler. There is only one way for us to get along as we should, and that is to make the most of humanity as we find it. The most of us are busy and have no time to wait for people to come around and thank us. Whenever we do our duty it matters not whether the world knows it or not. This doing of our duty inures to our character, and thus makes better men of us. Then, again, we are all so selfish that we expect more thanks and the like than we are entitled to. It has seemed to me that the injunction, love thy

neighbor as thyself, is a useless one except that it is an ideal for us to reach after. Practically it never works.

Now, I have one of the best neighbors in the world. I believe there is no man who means to be more upright than he. The entire community respects him. He comes over and smokes with me, and I return the visit and chew a cigar with him. Last fall one of those miserable pocket gophers got into his flower garden, and in polite language raised hades. Finally, the gopher worked through into my lot, and I have no doubt but my neighbor was glad to see him off his premises. The other day I counted seventy little hillocks that the pest had made in the lot where my old black cow runs, and if tomorrow morning I should see he had left my field and gone back on my neighbor's I should be thankful, in a secret way of course, that I was rid of him. I don't care how ethereal you are, or if your bump of love has become so enlarged that you can't wear your hat, you would rather that sickness would come to a neighbor's child than to your own. You would rather the sheriff would take your neighbor's key than your's. If death were to visit your community tonight you would a thousand times rather the crape would hang on some other door than yours. It is impossible for us to screw our love to the pitch of loving our neighbors as we love ourselves. The first law is self protection, and in the make-up of that law selfishness cuts a big figure. Hence we should understand that people consider us from their standpoint, and not from ours.

I was so relieved when I got out of this yard man's office that I didn't know how to kick up my heels high enough. There were the pure bright air, sunshine, beautiful grass and trees, singing birds—enough to cause a sane man to shout praises to God because he existed.

POINTS ON COLLECTING.

A man came in and called for his bill. As the items were read to him evidently he was not satisfied. He hitched in his chair and drew long breaths. While he did not permit his feelings to explode, he went so far as to remark that he would have no more to do with that firm for awhile. This man's account had been running for three years, with a credit now and then, and the point with him was that the balance was larger than it should be. The yard man went over the coal items and showed him that his coal for the three years had cost him seventy odd dollars, which the man admitted was as reasonable as he could expect. In addition there was a small bill for dimension, and possibly another item or two. It was the same old story of human nature; nine men in ten when they let a bill run and run will think that it is too much when settling day comes. I have been caught in that fix myself.

The customer said "good day" pleasantly enough when he went away, and then the yard man said that the day before when running over his accounts he had made the remark that he wouldn't give ten cents for the one just paid. He could not understand, however, why the man should be at sea as to the amount he owed. "He has had several bills," he said, "and why didn't he keep them?" Then it occurred to me why it would not be a good idea to have printed in bold type at the top of the blanks on which itemized statements are rendered, "Keep this!" If the instructions were followed it would help the customer to sustain his equilibrium. Then if he would preserve his receipts he could tell in five minutes how he stood and ask no odds of the books of the man he owed. But mighty little business is there in the average man, and the bill or statement gets away from him as though that is what it was for. Then there are more people in every community than you can count on your fingers who, if they can only get credit, don't care if the bills and statements do get away from

them. It is not the bills and statements but the credit that counts with them. Undoubtedly your ledger contains the names of several such people.

Then the yard man delivered himself of a little lore that was worth recording. "I have been sending two duns a week to this man," he said, "but they did not include the amount of his bill. That might have discouraged him! I never tell a man who is doubtful pay how much his account is when I send him a dunning letter. I say to him that I am hard up and want some money, and then if he comes in and has as much as he owes me I generally get it." You see this method is based on the principle we have been talking about, namely, that the average man who has a running account underestimates the amount he owes.

A yard man once gave a little talk on the statement business. "I'll be hanged," he said, "if I think it is my duty to fire a string of statements at a man, and I don't do it unless he is the kind that has to be coaxed in order to get a dollar out of him. I have taught more than one man that when I ask him by mail for my money he must pay the same attention to it as he would if I were to go to his house and ask him. To ignore statements is an easy way that many people who are perfectly able to pay have of staving off pay day. It seems to be part of their religion to throw statements one after another into the stove as fast as they receive them. I sold a bill of repair stuff to a lawyer, and at the end of sixty days sent him a statement. Two weeks after I met him on the street and told him I had a bill I wanted to put in his hands to collect, and pulled out his own. 'Ten percent for collection fees!' he jokingly remarked. Then he said he would have paid it before if he had known I was in a hurry for it. I asked him if he didn't receive a statement and he said he believed he did. I asked him if he didn't think it was a man's duty to pay attention to those things? 'You are right,' he said, 'it's a man's duty to do it'; and pulled out and paid me. I have sued a man after sending him only one statement. If

on receiving a statement a man cannot pay a bill, let him come around and say so!"

This man stood on tenable ground, at least theoretically, but there is not one business man in a thousand who has the backbone to take that stand.

THE ART OF BUYING RIGHT.

The old saying that a man is a good deal of a fellow who makes two blades of grass grow where formerly there was only one holds equally true when two profits can be secured where there was but one before. The idea of clipping the corners so that the profits may be increased is a legitimate one. To buy lumber worth the money, to handle it cheaply, should be the aspiration of every yard man. He doesn't feel good when his stock of lumber is on top of him instead of he on top of the lumber. Said a yard man to me a few months ago when the white pine list was supposed to be as stiff as a crowbar, "I know there are many dealers who are paying list prices, but you have no idea what a consolation it is to me to get under the published prices half a dollar."

I have never thought that the poor buyer stands much of a chance in the mercantile world anyhow. I could name several towns in which there are good buyers and buyers who are not so good, doing business side by side, and it is the latter who have the nightmare. Not long ago a salesman was deploring the position taken by a certain yard man. "He is a hades of a haggler over prices," said he. "He never thinks that a price list was made for practical use."

I felt like throwing up my hat for that yard man. Had I wanted a yard manager I am not sure but I should have opened negotiations with him. It is of course a nice thing for a salesman to make his towns and take orders as fast as he can book them at his own prices. I say it is a nice

thing—that is a nice thing for him. But it is not invariably a nice thing for the other fellow. I like the yard man who at any time stands ready to break away from the idea that price lists are made for practical use, and I suppose if I were put under oath I could name dealers who do not once in a hundred times pay list prices. And so long as they can manage to get under the prices of the list don't you think they would be 24-carat chumps to change their method of buying and pay list prices simply because it would please somebody for them to do so?

There are salesmen who take a common sense view of this question. I asked one of them if he felt like turning on a yard man and biting him if that yard man were disposed to jew him on prices? "Not a bit of it," was the reply. "I am going to buy the few goods I consume as cheaply as I can, and I accord that right to others. I respect the yard man who is onto the situation; who knows what lumber is worth and will pay what it is worth and no more, but he doesn't hurt my feelings if he tries to score me below the true value level. I am not obliged to sell him at his own figures, and need spend no time listening to him unless I am so disposed. I know there are dealers who, when they are in the mood, will give an unusually large order if they can get a little concession, and I think it is my business to get that order instead of leaving it for the chap who follows me to pick up. Yes, I sometimes take an order with the understanding that it shall be optional with the house to fill it. There are men on the road who object to this; they have a good deal of pride and want to be considered the whole push, and the end of things so far as bargaining is concerned. I am content, however, to be a sort of plastic medium between my house and the buyer. If my instructions are to sell at the list I do it; still, I think every salesman should use a little common sense in this regard, and in order to be able to do this he must be posted on the condition of stocks. Once within the past six months I went out with instructions to sell

at the list, and in less than three days I ran up against a man who wanted a considerable bill of an item that I knew wasn't the strongest in the market. The buyer knew it, too. He made a bid, and while I was not at liberty to accept it I told him I would write the boss, which I did, and later the boss told me he was glad to place the lumber at the price obtained. I don't care how stiff a list is there are certain items on it which can be bent a little."

I do not want you to understand, however, that it is your duty to take these opinions, or any other presented in this department, as law and gospel.

INCREASING PROFITS BY GLAZING.

The train was tearing across the prairies like all possessed, and a couple of lumbermen and myself were discussing those momentous questions, as they say in a debating society, which affect the retail trade. By an unusual coincidence both of these lumbermen were thinking of doing their own glazing. They had not gotten the matter definitely settled but they were turning it over in their minds, and one of them said if he went into it he should expect to make an extra 30 percent. I don't think these lumbermen knew all about buying glass, and I know I don't. There is a glass trust the methods of which in dealing with the buying public are not so clear to the average citizen as is the glass. This trust calls certain dealers qualified buyers, and others have to pay higher prices, if they get the glass at all. There are independent glass manufacturers, however, who regard it as their business to sell glass, and if you or I want a carload we can have it if we can pay for it.

Some of you may want to consider this glazing proposition. The men who talked it over with me are successful lumbermen who are not in the habit of calling pigs big hogs. They saw a point in it else they would have let it alone. No doubt you think you know enough to glaze sash—we all

do. I feel confident that right from the start, by working industriously, I could glaze two or three sash a day. When in a sash and door factory recently I timed a Swede who was glazing, and he spread the putty at the rate of 22 feet a minute. He went over the sash like a jack rabbit. He had been practicing, though, for eleven years, and ought by this time to know how to do it. There would be this favorable feature: You would probably not have to hire an extra hand to do your glazing. You and your hired man could do it at odd spells, and no doubt he would like some such little thing to turn his attention to so that he could put in full time. I remember I did when I was a hired man. Then, very likely, there may be some kid around your place who, owing to his quick perception and nimble fingers, would take the putty knife and make both you and your hired man feel ashamed of yourselves. It is the kind of work that would suit a kid, for a few minutes at any rate.

One of these men complained that much of the putty used at the sash and door factories sticks fully as fast as would first class mud. He was of the opinion it was some kind of mud. If he went into the business he would use putty that was putty; that old kind, you remember, that when we were boys we couldn't dig from a sash without taking the edge off our jackknife. We would have to whittle it off, and sometimes the knife would go astray and the sash would get slashed. That is not the kind of putty, however, that everybody uses these days.

KODAK AS A TRADE WINNER.

The yard man was as wideawake as a trout. He is also young, and it is surprising how smart young men are these days. There has been a hot time in the old town in which this dealer is located, and it is these hot times which bring out what there is in a man. Strange as it may sound to some, I know dealers who through a prolonged scrap have

made money. The competition nerved them to their best, and in order to hold their own they devised methods and schemes which otherwise would have laid latent, and which put them clear on top.

This yard man is a photographer—one of those amateur photographers against whom so much bile is directed. We not infrequently see little pieces in the papers aimed at the several million of men and women who carry their cameras around with them as regularly as they do their years. Not long ago some chump of a writer remarked that amateur photographers "do not know what good manners are." I'll bet \$4 the man who wrote that has nothing so unique or beautiful that anyone would want a snap at it. He is some sour, jealous, two-legged old crab who is going backward through the world. My earthly possessions are incomputable—not in dollars, however, but if anybody wants to snap on my old black cow, Gordon setter, chickens, or even myself, he is at liberty to do so. These photogrpahers derive pleasure from us without it costing us a cent, and any man who would object to that kind of deal will never be my bedfellow if I can help it.

When things were so hot in this yard man's town that they boiled this dealer set to thinking and, without desiring to stir up any feeling, let me here remark that thinking is an act to which not many of us can plead guilty. We permit others to do our thinking for us and then rebel because our lot is so hard, or because we are so mixed up with mist and fog that we cannot see our way. We remain nonentities, when if we would only let ourselves out—be ourselves, act ourselves—we would soar as on the wings of an eagle. What excuse do you think we can make when called upon to account for the talents which were given us—those poor talents, pinched and cramped to suit the notion or pocket-book of some man, party or sect?

This is the use this man made of his little camera: When he would get an inkling of somebody who was going to build, of a Sunday away he and his wife would drive to the

place, visit with the people a little, as folks of tact can do, take a snap shot of the old home and in due time present some finished pictures to the prospective builder. You see this little attention went right to the spot. He says by this simple means he sold a half dozen house bills. Then, to make good a promise, when the new house was up he would take a picture of that also, and the pictures of the old and the new hanging side by side were regarded as household treasures.

The same yard man told me another that is not bad. One evening when the mercury was several points below zero he bundled up in his fur overcoat and robes and drove eleven miles to see a man who was going to build. He reined up in front of the house and was told to come in, but to go in was not on the program. So Mr. So-and-so, scantily dressed for that temperature, came out, and the yard man began to talk lumber to him. The farmer shifted his position from one foot to the other, drew his head down like a mudturtle to get away from the blast and then he began to shiver. All the time the yard man was describing to him the advantages which would arise from buying his lumber from him, and at length the farmer saw the point, and the bargain was closed. "He had to buy the bill or freeze to death!" said the yard man.

Here is another on the same man: "Things were so hot," he said, "that when we saw a man coming into town who looked as though he might buy lumber we would board his wagon and talk lumber to him while he was driving to his point of destination. One day a farmer hitched his team in front of my place and bargained for some stuff. Then he went out, and being afraid that my competitor would get hold of him and induce him to change his mind we unhitched his horses, ran his wagon into the yard and loaded it up. Sure enough, back he came and said he had changed his mind about taking that lumber. I pointed out to him the lumber already on the wagon, told him it was ready for him to start with, then he went back and I suppose told

the other fellow he had changed his mind. At any rate he hauled the lumber we had loaded on his wagon away with him."

SIDE LINES.

There is no law to compel a yard man from dealing in other merchandise than lumber and coal. If he thinks he can make a few honest dollars outside of these lines the way is open to him. There are dealers, however, who do not consider it "proper form," as society people say, to do so. They stick to lumber and eschew all else. It has seemed singular to me that retail lumbermen do not pay more attention to builders' hardware. It dovetails with lumber nicely. A little department of it often pays a profit on the investment that is surprising.

I was in an office when a man bought a screen door, and of course he wanted hinges to go with it. There are two ways of selling a screen door, one, when competition is hot, to sell the hinges separately, and the other, when more is got for the door, to throw in the hinges. The yard man went from the office into an adjoining room, reached to the top of some sort of cupboard and took down the packages of hinges. Permit me to be so bold as to say that is not the way to keep hardware. It looks too much like "boot-legging," as we call it in Iowa when a fellow sells whisky unlicensed and on the sly. It looked as though the yard man wanted no one to know he was dealing in hardware.

In another office there were shelves with sliding glass doors in front of them, and on these shelves were kept some of the common articles in hardware. That looked like something. The little stock was neat and clean, and was nicely arranged. At one place, when talking on the subject of hardware, the yard man said he did keep a few articles, and took down from a shelf a box that would hold a couple of quarts, and in which was about every kind of screw you can imagine. They had been mixed and remixed, and to get

at any particular size it was necessary to dump the contents of the box on the table and then pick out what was wanted. In the stock above referred to there was nothing of this kind. On the end of each box there was wired a sample of the screw the box contained and right through the goods were arranged in this systematic order. When we look at our offices or yards we are looking into a looking glass which reflects the kind of heads we have, you know.



"Eat chicken and get acquainted with the girls."

Paint is sold by some dealers, and in certain instances I know to advantage. In an office there were shelves at the side of the room, and on these shelves were pails of prepared paint. The dealer told how much of this paint he had sold in twelve months, the profit per gallon, and a mental computation made his income from that source \$100. To be sure that isn't much, but it is too much to be kicked out of doors when it can be kept inside by simply handling

a small stock of paint. This man says there is no loss in this stock. If he gets a color that is not a seller it is exchanged for one that will sell. If the cans become shop worn they are shipped back and fresh cans returned to replace them. To me it looked like an easy way to make a sum of money that will chink in on several occasions. I do not remember seeing a dealer who sold white lead. There is no profit in it, and it is probably better to let it alone. Let the druggist have the trade!

I know what some of you will say—it has been said to me several times—"I don't want to encroach upon the trade of the hardware man!" If you find consolation in that kind of business religion I should have no desire to knock the prop from under you. If the hardware man has a mortgage on you, keep quiet and let the sparrows do the scrapping. You know of course that the hardware man will sell all the screen doors and windows he can, and I wish somebody would tell me why that trade belongs more to him than the trade in nails, screws and hinges does to you. It shows an excellent spirit to respect the interests of others—and so it does to respect one's own interests.

In touching on this question I have not given my imagination long wings. The subject might be so enlarged as to include land, horses, cattle, wheat, corn, banks, hotels, stocks, and an occasional game of poker, all of which are looked after on the side by yard men. Some of them are a regular menagerie when it comes to doing business.

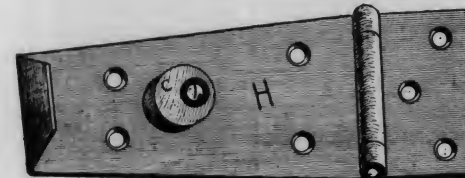
I recently went to a church supper with a yard man, ate chicken and got acquainted with the girls. This man is a thorough believer in special lines. He says he wants to get people to his place, and having once done so he thinks that the right kind of treatment will bring them there again. It may not be lumber they want the first time, but they will want it some time. He named an article he had been selling which was sold by no one else in town, and it had brought new customers to his place. There is a good deal of business sense in such a method. All of you may not take to it,

but in my opinion some of you might adopt it to advantage. No doubt there are a thousand yard men in the country who would say they are not getting their share of trade, and what more appropriate than that they should take a lever of this kind and do something toward prying themselves out of the hole.

A yard man told me that when he first came to the town trade was so slow that he took up real estate. He saw that the town was bound to grow, so he bought five acres on the outskirts, laid it off into lots, and was so fortunate as to sell everything. "It helped me out," he said. It is not every yard man, however, who can successfully balance on his shoulder a lumber yard and a subdivision, though I have known several who have done it.

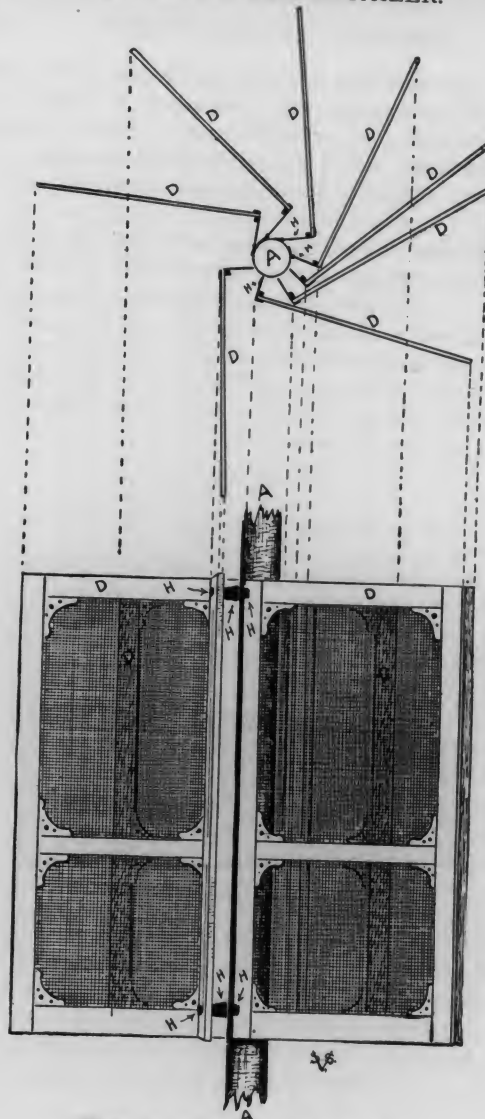
DEVICE FOR HANGING DOORS.

A yard man of ideas explained how he exhibits his front doors. The accompanying illustration will help to make it clear. He takes a strap hinge, clips the end off so as to make it a little broader, and then turns the end up say an



"He takes a strap hinge."

inch and a half. He takes old broomsticks, saws them up into pieces about an inch and a quarter long, bores a hole through them lengthwise, avoiding the center, rivets or screws these pieces to the hinges, and thus has an eccentric. The butt of the hinge is screwed to the wall or post, as the case may be, and the task of hanging a door consists simply



"Hang his screen doors on a post."

in placing the edge between the turned up hinge and the cam formed by the piece of broom handle, and gravity does the rest. Two of these hinges are of course required for each door. If a door is wanted, simply lift up on it and it is released. When thus hung the doors can be swung back and forth, showing both sides of them, thus avoiding handling and rehandling. A hood about four feet wide is built over the doors to keep off the dust. The coming season this yard man will hang his screen doors on a post and be able to show the whole batch of them in less than five minutes. The device will be so novel and at the same time so much of a plaything that customers will manipulate the doors themselves and make their selections.

RUINOUS WRANGLING.

There is many a town in which the yard men have one another by the ears. Lumbermen as a class are rather positive mortals, anyhow, and perhaps the wonder is that more of them do not wage open war. The most of us wage war in secret, but that is another leaf of the story. If we were hanged for our secret sins the majority of us would dangle.

The lumber buying public invariably enjoys these scraps. If the grocers of my town were to get into a fight and sell tea and codfish at cost I wouldn't care if they were cutting the throats of one another clear back to the ears. That which would interest me would be the fact that I could take one of the big dollars earned by pushing the pencil, go to one of these stores and get more goods for it than I could get at times when the condition of trade was normal. The fact that one of these grocers would sell me goods at cost would not increase my respect for him one bit, either. I should know he was doing it not because he loved me but because he was trying to knock the pins from under his competitor across the street. I should be very willing to be used as a medium. That is the view lumber consumers

take of it when yard men in a town raise the battle cry. They little care who gets wounded if they can rake in the spoils.

I have seen many results of these fights in the shape of vacant offices and empty yards. In these cases it was a fight to a finish. One of the contestants would get that tired feeling beyond endurance, or fail financially, and get out because he wanted to badly, or was obliged to. There are men to whom I should like to present photographs of these yards in ruins, labeled "The Outcome of the Fight!" It might set them to thinking, and it might not. I have in mind as I write two yard men, each of whom would take everything the other one had except his lifeblood if he had the chance, and both say they are there "to stay." I know as a rule there is as much bluff as anything in that expression; still these men have stayed for some time, and so far as I know will stay right along, continuing to tickle the people in that community who buy lumber and throwing away their own opportunities to make a success of their business lives. Under such circumstances it does not seem to me that a man should feel proud of his staying qualities.

I have never come in contact with a lumberman who was doing the knock-down and get-knocked-down act who did not express a regret that things were as they were. If the "other fellow" were only out of the way he would settle down to quiet business again and live and let live once more. It wouldn't do in these cases, however, for the competitors to come together, acknowledge how foolish they had been, each forgive and forget a little, shake hands and call the thing off. I say it wouldn't do—it would be too easy. It would look too much like baiting that selfish nature of ours with sugar instead of keeping it stirred up with acid.

I was in a town in which there is rather warm competition, and one of the dealers when discussing the situation said he did not suppose things would be otherwise until either he or his neighbor quit or died. "I claim to have learned my business," said he. "Every week I outbuy him; I can sort

my stock to better advantage than he can, and as a result I can undersell him. What is there unfair in that?" In my opinion a business man's knowledge is his tools of trade, and he is foolish if he doesn't make use of them. Because I wouldn't agree on his kind of prices he went to cavorting. The fact is the prices I am getting give me as much profit as the prices he wanted would have given him."

THE KIND OF LETTER TO WRITE.

I have seen wholesale men as mad as blazes about the letters received from their customers. The orders of those customers were not filled exactly to suit them, and their inclination was to give it to the men of whom they had bought. So they would sit down and proceed to give it to them! This giving it to them ought to be a last resort, beloved. Catch men with sugar just as you would flies—that is the idea. Try the diplomacy of gentle and respectful speech first. If this fails entirely and you become dead sure that the man, according to the choice language of Mr. Greeley, is a liar and a horsethief, why, then, squirt acid into his eyes until he hollers.

When sitting by the desk of the manager of a big sash and door factory he mentioned a letter received from a yard man with whom, by the way, I am well acquainted. This yard man had bought the mill work for a fine house of this concern with the understanding that it should go forward in one shipment. In this regard, however, the yard man had changed his mind and asked that it be forwarded in three installments. "It will cost us more money to do that," said the manager, "but the tone of the man's letter was such that if necessary I would take off my coat and go out and help load the stuff into different cars." There you see comes in the reward of a decent, gentlemanly letter.

In more business places than we could count it is thought that any three-dollar-a-week man who can swing a stub pen

and dovetail English words together is good enough to write business letters. It is a delusion, however, and oftentimes a snare that catches around the neck and shuts the wind off.

First and last, the wholesale men tell me several things, and two or three months ago one of them pulled out a batch of letters from yard men and laid them before me to read. I wanted to get at the bottom of a certain matter, and this man was so kind as to assist me. I received the information I wanted; and all the time I had an eye on the character of the letters. Some of them were grouty. A few of them were documents of complaint because lumber had advanced. Others were sincere and frank, put into such language as one gentleman would use to another face to face. Every letter was a portrayal of the character of the man who wrote it.

If I were running a business it seems to me I should be very particular about the letters which were sent out. I should want the man who wrote them to bring out the sugar bowl and oil can and leave the pepper box in the pantry.

Business is business, and a man should say what he means, I have heard it said. That is right, too; a man should always say what he means, but there are a hundred and one ways of saying what he means.

CONCERNING MINOR THINGS.

Come to look at that heading I don't like it, for I cannot swear there are any minor things. I used to think there were. I used to think there were people who were very minor when compared to myself; then I thought there were many others to whom I dare not lift my eyes, they were so refulgent with greatness. I am thankful I am out of this rut of thinking. In my opinion there isn't a human being on the earth who does not in the great plan cut as much of a figure as I do. I feel that others are as important as I am, and I as important as they. Simply because our governor

was a politician and successfully pulled the wires, I do not rank him above that man across the street who is laboriously shaping stone for the foundation for a house. The standard is when a man is doing his best.

The Almighty has made no minor things. The grain of sand is as perfect as the rock. The elephant, by those who are unfamiliar with him, is called a wonderful animal, simply because he is big. The other day I saw a little black speck on my hand. The natural eye could detect nothing farther except that the speck moved. I placed it under the microscope, and there was shown an insect with legs, eyes, digestive apparatus, and anatomical projections as surprising as the elephant's trunk. Call the elephant more wonderful than this insect? Not a whit. If you say the elephant is wonderful for his great size, I would retort that this insect is equally wonderful for its minuteness. Oh, but if we could only quit sitting in judgment on the works of the Creator.

In an office in which I was sitting one partner was about to make an inquiry of a southern house as to the price of yellow pine flooring, when the other partner said: "Tell 'em we want flat back."

"Why flat back?" I made bold to ask.

"It looks thicker than the grooved back and sells better," was the reply. You see, it was the minor matter of a little extra thickness the yard man was thinking about.

Thick material is a consideration with thousands of lumber buyers. A yard man told me that to certain customers he was unable to sell surfaced dimension, for the reason that in the process of surfacing some of the wood is cut away. In some of the eastern markets they have been sticklers for plump thicknesses. If they bargained for inch lumber they were going to have it an inch thick. They said: "You can't sell us inch lumber and put off three-quarters on us any more than you can sell us a pound of corn and deliver us twelve ounces."

There were western saw mill men who tried to find a

market in the east, and whose stuff was thrown back on their hands. "But this stuff is accepted in the western markets," these saw mill men urged.

"To blazes with your western markets," they said, "we are in the east!"

The sawing of scant thicknesses in the west was first practiced as a saving grace in the freight line; and then we western chaps are so happy-go-lucky that we don't kick much provided a board is only thick enough to stop a hog in its wild flight. I suppose, however, that a just judge or jury would say the eastern people are correct in the position they take.

"It is surprising how certain terms when skilfully used by a salesman will help things along," said another yard man. "I sold a bill to a particular farmer out here three miles. I showed him my stock and he walked around seemingly indifferent until I pointed to a pile of boards and remarked that there was some good, wide stock. I could see it appealed to him. The boards were really wide, and the old fellow seemed to think that the width was a sign of superiority. The fact was that for the purpose for which the lumber was to be used it would not amount to the snap of a finger to the farmer whether the boards were nine or eighteen inches wide. I believe, however, he would have gone out of my yard without buying had it not been for that pile of wide boards."

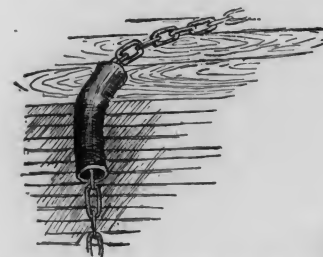
Of a somewhat similar nature was the testimony of a Minnesota yard man regarding his experience in selling shingles. He said he did not sell many 5 to 2 for the reason that he could not honestly push them. "I believe that a 6 to 2 is worth as much to a cent," he said. "If I were building a whole city and covering it with wood I wouldn't put one 5 to 2 shingle on the roof. At one time last season I ran out of 6 to 2, and as luck would have it, and as it generally does have it, while I was shy I had a call for a good many shingles, and I didn't fail once to sell the 5 to 2."

I would show the shingle, laying particular stress on the thickness, and they would go."

If your lumber yard was mine I wouldn't want a better argument to fire at the average buyer than that my lumber was of extra thickness. To the contractors, and others who know their business, such an argument would not have much weight, but the farmer would jump for it as the trout jumps for the fly.

TO PROTECT THE EDGES OF LOADS.

The bungler is out of place even in the handling of a coarse product like lumber. I have seen more loads of lum-



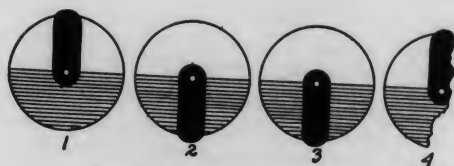
"The best thing I have seen for the purpose."

ber leaving yards bound in the most crude way imaginable than I have lived weeks. Sometimes a rope is used, sometimes a chain, and it is not uncommon at such times to hear the wood crack when the binder is tightened, the edges of the boards on top of the load giving way. When the tongue of a flooring or siding board is in part torn off or a groove smashed in it is highly probable that the carpenter, contractor or owner, as the case may be, thinks he is not getting value received. It would be easy for him to think that the man of whom he bought the lumber was a Cheap John who had set up as a lumber merchant because he could do nothing else.

Any bungler can bind a load of lumber by throwing a rope or chain over it and then tightening it, but in this crude method the proper detail is lost sight of. In one yard I saw small sacks made of coarse, strong material and stuffed with some other material, presumably cotton, wool or old rags, to be placed on the upper edges of the load under the rope or chain for the protection of the lumber. The best thing I have seen for the purpose, however, consists of a piece of heavy rubber pipe, say six inches in length and two or three inches in diameter, through which the rope or chain is passed, and of course the common sense of any of us would tell us that the rubber should come between the edges of the load and the rope or chain.

KEEPING TAB ON YARD HANDS.

The yard man who gives work to only one man may save time by skipping this article, for the suggestion is not one that he will have occasion to adopt. I asked the yard man what kind of a Chinese puzzle it was on his door jam



"Keeping track of the men."

and he said it was for the purpose of keeping track of his men. As you will see, there are several little dics, three inches in diameter perhaps, the lower half of each painted black and the upper half white. Screwed to the centers of these discs are sorts of tongues also painted black, and which when turned up would show as a black streak across the white. Over the discs are the numbers, 1, 2, 3, 4, corresponding to the number of men employed. This is

the machinery on the door jam. Hanging down through the ceiling, over the desk, is a rope which is connected with a triangle on the end of the office outside which serves as a bell. When a man goes out with a load or for other reason is to be absent he turns up the tongue on his disc, and then at a glance the office man knows it would be senseless to call for that particular man. It is known at all times the men who are around the yard and those who are outside.

IN FEAR OF THE LINE YARD MEN.

The president of a retail association recently read a paper in which was expressed the opinion that there would soon be none but line yards. This opinion I have often heard expressed by single yard men, and I must confess I am at a loss to understand the logic on which it is based. Of course, if all the single yard men choose to sell out to the line yard fellows, why then it follows that the prophecy of these single yard men will have been realized.

The objection to line yards often amounts to a pique. If I have a yard at Gun Town and another one at Toad Holler I am practically a line yard man. So long as I had a yard in Gun Town only I was supposed to be a pretty good fellow, but the minute I open a yard in Toad Holler my nature by some is alleged to have undergone a change. I have become a raging monopolist and want to crowd all my neighbors off the face of the earth. If I wanted to make money at one of these points don't you think I would want to make money at both of them? Do you think that because I run two yards my assets in this world's goods have so suddenly increased that I can do business on a scale of no profit just for the fun of the thing?

A single yard man recently poured into my ear a tale of woe concerning what seemed to him the outlook. The line yard man at the next station up the road looked to him

bigger than an elephant. I asked him what was the matter with him? If he didn't respect his territory; if he sold lumber ruinously low? He could hardly formulate a charge, but the "line yard" was a red flag that goaded him to fury.

This I will admit—that the local manager of a line yard does not always do the square thing. He is anxious to hold his job, as the most of us are to hold jobs, and to make as good financial showing to his principal as he can he steps over the bounds. He is not always a man of good judgment. I have come in contact with local managers of line yards



"Poured into my ear a tale of woe."

who evidently would not grade above high C. This is necessarily so. There is a large number of line yards in the country, and to secure thoroughly capable managers for all of them would be out of the question. I have known these local men to conduct themselves in matters of trade in a way which was not approved by the proprietor of the line. Not long ago something of this kind came under my observation. The proprietor at once took the train for the town in which the yard is located, and I know if he didn't read his man a hot tongued lecture he changed his mind before

he got there. Line yard men size up similarly to the rest of us. There are upright business men who run lines of yards—I am personally acquainted with several such. On the other hand I could name a line yard man who no doubt is meaner than any "pussley," as we call it, that ever overran your vegetable beds. I should not want to do business alongside of one of his yards. He is not mean, though, because he is a line yard man. He would have been mean in any business.

I wish I could assure the doubting and diffident single yard souls that the best single yard lumber merchants of the country have no fear of the line yards in the least. This has been said before, and it will bear repeating. Those merchants regard the line yard as the softest possible snap in the way of a competitor. To start with, very often there is a feeling against a line yard by the people of the town in which it is located. It is not "a home institution," they say. This prejudice is at times both senseless and un-American; still it exists and feeds the minds of the unthinking. Again, the up-to-date local lumberman who knows by heart the people of his section does not stand in fear of such competition as is put up by the average man in charge of a line yard. Go where you may, and it is ten to one it is not the line yard that is doing more than its share of business. I could name those which are hanging on by the skin of their teeth while their neighbors are prospering.

As I look at it there is no sense in talking about line yards "crowding" out single yards. They may supplant them—I can't say as to that—but if they do it will be because they come forward with cold money and buy them out. They have a constant eye to that. No doubt the line yard men operating in Iowa alone would buy a hundred yards tomorrow if they could do so on an equitable basis. They are constantly in evidence as to their faith in the value and stability of the retail lumber trade.

A dealer in a two-yard town was recently talking with me on the subject of prospective competition. You know

there are some towns which in this regard are hung on a hair trigger. You can hardly tell whether there is room for another yard or not. This town is one of that kind. "It is not the competition of the line yard that I care so much about," he remarked, "for the line yard wants to make money. But it is the irresponsible fly-up-the-creek fellow who is liable to come, demand a larger percentage of the business than he ought to have, and if he can't get it tear things to pieces by raising hades!"

MOOD AS A MOTIVE.

The yard man asked if I felt that I must be in a certain mood when I wrote, and I told him that I repudiated moods years ago; that a fellow who writes for a living must be ready to go at it any time just as he would if he were digging ditches for a living. The yard man said he wished he could get into that way of selling lumber. "But I have not been able to," he continued. "At times when I take a man in hand I feel almost absolutely sure of selling him. I know I am right in touch with him; and it seems to me that he couldn't get away from me if he tried. At other times it is like standing on one hill with my prospective customer on another. There is too much distance between us. When I feel that I have my man in hand the question of price hardly gives me a thought. I could sell him at almost any price, I believe, but when it is one of my off days I am so mighty afraid I will accomplish nothing that the first I know I am offering some sort of concession. I propose to knock off a little here and there and go wriggling around in a way that it seems to me would be plain to anybody that I was not sure of my footing."

This yard man opened up a big subject. All of us have less confidence and backbone at some times than at others, and I don't believe it is dyspepsia that is the cause of it, either. Dyspepsia is bad enough, but it has become such a

stock term that we apply it as a cause for all the minor ills of the mind. If a man is irritable, mean, ungentlemanly, a nice way to excuse him is to say he has the dyspepsia. I don't believe it is any excuse, as any man with a head half full of brains ought to know enough to be decent and treat people at least courteously, no matter if dyspepsia lies in chunks in his stomach. When a man who does not feel up to concert pitch physically blurts around and slobbers like a catfish, treading on your feelings or mine, it is simply a plain exhibition of the man proper. Get him a little roiled and he would do the same thing if he had the pristine health of Adam.

Physically and mentally we are constantly relaxing and strengthening—swelling and receding. To speak metaphorically, the tide comes in and goes out. When it is full we have hope, confidence, grit; and when it ebbs those qualities are less intense. It is a natural process of nature, and as life depends on action and reaction when the process ceases we die.

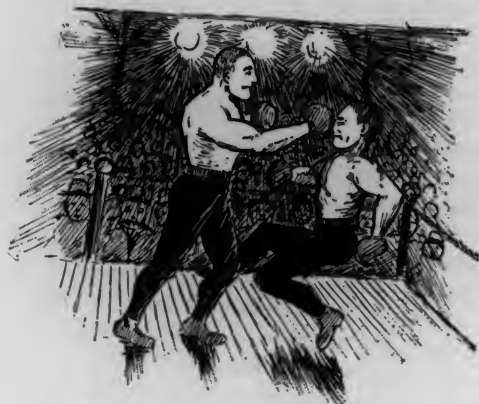
It is an excellent thing to set our standard when the tide is in—just as we would make our will when we know what we are doing. A lumberman recently told me that some of the most serious mistakes in his earlier business life were a result of his not having the backbone to stay by his judgment. He would figure on large bills, he said, knowing at the time that the proposition was an equitable one all around, but in a day or two a feeling would possess him that he would like to go a few dollars better on his own estimates. His mental sky would assume a bluish cast, and he would begin to think that surely somebody would underbid him and that if he didn't sell that amount of lumber to that one particular man or corporation he didn't know where he would sell it. You see the tide was going out and there was a letting down in his determination. Felt the same way yourself, haven't you?

We are great creatures—great machines; there is more

to us than we will ever find out, and to sell lumber successfully it is as necessary for us to study ourselves and others as it would be if we practiced law or dealt out pills.

OPPOSED TO RETAIL ASSOCIATIONS.

Of course there is no law to compel a dealer to join a retail association any more than there is to force him to become a member of a church or a club. If a dealer thinks he can succeed better outside an association there is no one to say to him nay. I mingle with a great many yard men and correspond with many. We discuss every phase of the yard business, agree and disagree, but never quarrel. Life



"A blow right between the eyes."

is too short for that. I don't think much of the discipline two men have undergone if they can't discuss differences without getting hot under the collar. This, however, I am glad to be able to say: Not one dealer in fifty outside of the association has anything to say against them. It is on the principle, I suppose, that while we love ourselves we know we are sinners.

A letter came to me today from a yard man who has a grievance against all retail associations. He says he does not think it is American for these associations to restrict the trade of their members as they do. He would have competition free and open, leaving every man to sell to whom he may. "This fencing in a territory and saying to a man 'thus far thou shalt go' cripples the efforts and ambitions of a merchant," he writes.

Well, now, I don't know about that. But if it is so the efforts and ambitions of this retail man surely need not be crippled. He is in a position to be a free lance, and can sell lumber from Florida to Canada. He is privileged to sell all the lumber that is used in his own town and in the towns surrounding him. But does he? I should like to sit down and talk the matter over with him, and if I had that pleasure I should ask him how much more lumber he is selling than he would sell if he were a member of an association. That is a pertinent question. And in advance I believe I know something of the answer he would give. He would say that although he is not a member of an association he is restricted in territory.

Every yard man rigidly guards his territory. I was in a town in which every yard man belongs to an association, and also in which there is a local understanding as to prices and the volume of trade to which each dealer is entitled. One of these dealers remarked, "We don't let any outsider come in here."

You can readily interpret that remark. It means that if you or I should attempt to sell a bill of lumber in the territory of these dealers, in classical language they would be "onto" us, and that we would have to meet prices which would take the sand out of us. That is the way to do it, too. When a yard man objects to becoming an association member for the reason that it will clip his wings in regard to the volume of his sales, his wings, as a rule, get clipped anyway. Bear in mind, I say "as a rule." There generally comes in the exception. There are retail dealers who will

make their way anywhere. They were born that way. They are merchants by instinct. It is as natural for them to sell lumber and by some hook or crook get the advantage of other dealers as it is for them to breathe. These men, for the time being, would succeed whether they were members of an association or not. But here is a fact that gives us a Jeffries blow right between the eyes when we go to talking against the association: Nine in ten of the most prominent and most capable dealers in the great western country are members of associations. They didn't go into it blindly, either. They are men of good mental caliber and carefully reasoned the thing out. They did not want to be handicapped nor hoodooed, hence they came into the fold.

I have no vitriolic words for those dealers who do not see their way clear to swell the association membership. Some of my good friends in the trade are not members. I don't ask everybody to look through my eyes. The good Lord has given them eyes of their own. I think, however, they are shortsighted when they contend against association methods and principles, and very likely they think I am shortsighted in thinking so. If they do it is all right. I accord to them the same privilege that I enjoy.

Doubtless this dealer who raises objections to associations has engaged in the retailing of lumber as a life work. If he hasn't a wife and children he ought to have them, and if he has, like a good husband and father he has their future welfare in view. He hopes that his business will increase; that he will secure for himself a good home and lay up something for sickness and old age. The lumber business is the foundation of his financial hopes. And I want to say to him that were it not for the associations he would be building on sand. His chances in the retail lumber business would not be worth a picayune. He would better go to cobbling, playing baseball or even trading horses.

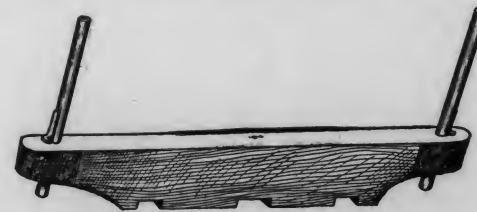
I should like to have this man visit some of the sections in the eastern states where the retail yards have been pushed out of existence, where the wholesale dealers have monop-

olized all the trade, and then tell me how he would like a dose of the same medicine. Do away with the retail associations and it would be the same elsewhere. The manufacturers and wholesale dealers carry large, assorted stocks; they have their corps of salesmen; and there are a hundred and one of them who, did not the retail associations hold a club over their heads, would sell lumber to anybody who wanted to buy, and they would sell so cheap that the small yard man would have no chance.

I am a friend of the retail associations because they protect and will perpetuate the retail business of the country. They are the great sustaining prop under the yard man's business today. This dealer may denounce the associations, but I feel assured that did he understand how much he is indebted to them he would be their friend. They bear to him a relation similar to that of insurance—they protect him.

AN IMPROVED BOLSTER.

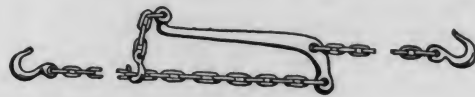
This bolster is heavier at the end than the ordinary one, and the stakes are made of 1-inch, or larger, gas pipe, of any length desired, with a shoulder welded on one side of the pipe to keep it from dropping through too far. It is



simple, yet its advantages are several. To start with, there are straight sides against which to pile lumber. The same number of boards of a given width can be piled on the platform from start to finish. It is not necessary to wiggle

over the end of the stake, as ordinarily is done when the pile reaches the top of it. When it is desired to load or unload from the side of the wagon the stakes can easily be pulled out, which leaves the way clear. The depth of the bolster where the stake goes through is four inches, and it is necessary to cap and bolt them strongly so they may not split. For replacing the old style bolsters with these, the wagonmaker furnishing the gas pipe and retaining the bolsters which are replaced, the cost is from \$4 to \$7 a wagon, the difference in price depending on the man who does the job.

With a heavy and high load these stakes will spread to some extent, as will all tall stakes when not stayed at the top. In this connection I want to illustrate a chain which



an ingenious yard man has devised, and which may be used for holding these gas pipe stakes from spreading, or in any other place where binding is necessary.

You will observe it is easily made. A good blacksmith would make a short job of it. The length of the short arm of the lever is two inches; the lever may be as long as you choose to have it—say just long enough to be handy. Draw the chain up nearly taut and hook it around the stakes or elsewhere, then pull the lever over and hold it in place as indicated in the sketch. In the yard in which it is used they wouldn't dispense with it for its weight in copper.

READ AND YOU WILL KNOW.

That is an old saying, but it depends for its truthfulness on how carefully we read. The world is fairly full of people who go on a hop, skip and jump when they read. It is the same as it is with some people when they listen. They

cannot hear a statement and report it correctly to save them. I say they cannot, for the careless way of registering a statement in the receiving reservoir of their thinker, as it were, has become second nature to them. Then, again, they may be too lazy to read or to listen. There are as many men lazy mentally as there are physically. And oftentimes the two forms of laziness are not combined in one individual. Some of the brightest men I know, men who are as industrious as bees in doing mental work, who burn midnight oil and harp on industry as the keynote to all material success, have not enough physical get up to hoe a short row of potatoes. Then there are those who pride themselves on their physical hustling quality, who will do muscular work unceasingly and swear that the men who work their little think tanks are lazy, good for nothing things who don't like to work, yet when it comes to mental effort these very people are the personification of laziness.

You see, it is owing to the way we are built. The lazy man can no more help being lazy than the tall man can help being tall or the black man black. It would be as reasonable to expect a leopard to change his spots as for a lazy man to get over his ever present disposition not to work. A dozen children crying for bread may force him to work, his appreciation of the opinion that the community may have of him may cause him to put forth effort, but it is forced, and all the time his very bones rebel against it.

I have given considerable study to the lazy man, and I confess I have not been able to analyze him to my entire satisfaction. It may be for the reason that no great man before me has helped me out. You know the pioneer in any line cannot do so well as can those who come after him. The latter build on the pioneer's work; they take advantage of his mistakes, profit by them and erect a higher structure than he did or could. I doubt if in all literature you have read so much about laziness as you have in the last three minutes. You have, of course, seen it defined as idleness, indolence, but that treatment of it does not

cover the ground. The lazy man is in some way deformed and should be championed as he should did he have the hay fever or corns.

I did not start out to write a piece on laziness, but these side issues will force themselves in. I wanted to let it be known that if some of the members of the retail associations would carefully read the by-laws and constitutions of their organizations they would know more about them than they do. But instead of getting at it carefully they indulge in this hop, skip and jump process of reading and listening, get hold of the matter superficially, and then talk through their hats.

I don't know how many small yard men there are who are worrying themselves bald headed under the belief that the line yard men are running the retail associations just as they have a mind to. Thus they think the line yard men get their wedges in and are able to take all sorts of advantage of their co-laborers who spread out less than they. There are dealers, too, who are doing this when the constitution and by-laws are lying in a drawer of their desk, and in less than a minute they could so compose themselves that they could go home and sleep soundly. It would be a great piece of business to let the line yard men have control of the associations, wouldn't it? And it would be as great a piece of business to bar the line yard men out and give the control over to the single yard men. One would be as sensible as the other. The object of the association is not expressly to benefit either single or line yard men. It is to benefit them all.

Take the Northwestern association, for instance, a most successful organization, one that has 1,700 yards on its list. Say I have a line of 100 yards scattered throughout this association's territory. I become converted to the association idea. I ride to Minneapolis in a palace car, dine on turtle soup at the eating station on the way, put up at the West, and possibly have taken a cocktail to give me the right kind of eclat and paid a quarter to have my shoes

touched up with stove blacking; I go across to the Lumber Exchange building, take an elevator car to the secretary's floor and swinging my big cane march into the secretary's room as pompously as though I were an alderman. I have not paid close attention to association matters, and we sit down to discuss them. Seeing that I am a big gun, or think I am, I ask what representation I will have in the forthcoming meetings. "You will have one vote," says the secretary, in his quiet way.

"One!" I shout so loud that they come running in from the hall to see that no one is being murdered.

"One! Don't I put in 100 yards? Don't I pay you \$500 in admission fees? Do you mean that I can have no more to say about running the association than my competitor over at Pumpkintown, who has paid only \$5 and whose yard I could tuck away in my vest pocket?"

"Precisely," says the secretary, "you catch my meaning exactly."

Now there is the law and the gospel of the matter in that brief imaginary conversation. The yard man out at Sodbrown, who has not been from Sweden twelve months and who has not yet learned how to fill out the Australian ballot, but who is so wise as to have cast his lot with the retail association, can go into a meeting and his vote will count as much as will mine, with 100 yards on the association list. "W-h-e-w!" some of you will whistle; "I didn't know that." Of course you didn't, and that is why you keep on talking through your headgear about the way the associations are, or can be, manipulated by the line yard men.

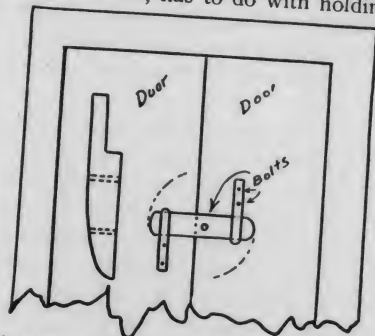
The retail association is a cosmopolitan institution. It seeks to extend equal benefits to all. It is under stock management. If I am entitled to vote but stay at home from the meetings, and then business affairs do not shape to my liking, what right have I to grumble? Whom should I kick but myself? I ought to have been on the ground to have voted and to have raised my voice, if necessary, against any

proceedings which did not please me. That would have been the man of it. Don't you say so?

AN EFFECTIVE DOOR FASTENER.

You who have double doors in lime houses, or in front of molding racks, know how difficult it is to keep them shut and even when shut closed tightly. I recently saw lime house doors on which was printed twice in big black letters, "Shut These Doors," and there they stood wide open. It was suggested to the yard man that if he would instruct his men to keep them open they would occasionally get shut.

This fixing, however, has to do with holding the doors



"As good a fastener as money will buy."

together after they had been shut. Double doors when fastened with a hook belly out, and the dust sifts in at the top and bottom. This simple fastener holds them where they should be—and all at the expense of a few cents. The cross piece is 1x6x24 inches, made of oak—yet there is no good reason why pine would not answer every purpose. Then shape the pieces which hold the ends, with three bolts fasten all in place and you have as good a fastener as money will buy. It is a fastener which fastens, which may be what you have been looking after.

MATERIAL THAT IS RETURNED.

The yard man had something to say about the material returned from jobs. "In cases of doors and windows," said he, "if there are misfits, no matter who may have made the measurements, back they come. Not long ago I furnished a small mill order, and the specifications were that nothing was to be returned, but back came a lot of oak molding that I don't know that I can sell for more than kindling wood prices. We are expected to take these things, though. We deal in them, and why can't we sell them to others? Others may not, and probably will not, want them, but that does not count with the people who return them. Furthermore, the articles are put in at a lump price, and when they are returned the question is asked, How much do you sell them for? We have to quote the retail price, and they expect something near that price."

Another dealer told me that one of the most costly rows he ever had was over returned material. "I had furnished a good-sized job," said he, "and there was a surplus of about 1,000 feet of dimension. I was then selling dimension for \$16, and I think I was laying it in my yard for \$13. When we came to settle the contractor wanted me to allow him \$14 for the thousand feet that was left over, and I wouldn't. The fact was, to get the bill I had to put it in at cost. The contractor didn't know that, for it is a business rule that I stick by that when I figure a bill in a lump I wouldn't tell the ghost of Jacob what price I put in this item or that one at. In my opinion it is nobody's business. If they can get a better bid, why, let 'em take it, but if mine is the lowest I am not going to tell them that I cut so much here and so much there. As I say, it is none of their business; that is my business. I made the remark that I would allow him \$13, and he flew up in the air in a minute. You know what fools we are sometimes to tear ourselves to pieces over little things. In that case he was a fool and so was I. Today I would have said, 'All right, that is sat-

isfactory.' Very likely today he would haul that dimension in my yard and not even ask me how much I would allow him for it. But today is not yesterday; neither is today tomorrow. We grow, or we ought to, as we see years. The carpenter was a powdery fellow, he touched off my fuse, and we had an explosion over that matter of a dollar! I sold lumber in that town for five years after that;



"He loaded his case with cigars."

the carpenter was working there all that time, and he never bought another board of me."

Probably at the time the yard man thought it was nothing to laugh at, but at this distance the whole thing seemed so ludicrous that he laughed heartily.

It is not, of course, strange that the average man should think that the dealer should stand ready to take back anything purchased of him. I have seen fancy dry goods

returned when evidently they had been handled by the whole family, some of whom had dirty fingers. The pristine whiteness of the goods had departed, but that cut no figure with the purchasers who had changed their minds. I was standing in a drug store in Chicago when an intelligent appearing man came in, handed a prescription to the druggist, said he had no use for it, and asked if it could be returned? The druggist asked him how much he paid for it, and on being told handed him 50 cents. No sooner was the man gone than the druggist poured the mixture into a waste pail. That druggist wouldn't have handed that half dollar back to you or me, but no doubt this man was one of his good customers. Very likely, to say nothing about buying his medicines there, he also bought his cigars and whisky. In fact, he loaded his case with cigars before he left the store. At first blush almost any man would say that one of the most worthless articles in the world to any one for whom it is not filled is a prescription. And probably nine in ten times we would be better off if we would keep the prescriptions out of us internally even if they were filled for us. This man didn't know but the preparation could be used in another case. Had the druggist told him it could not I know from the looks of the man he would have taken it all right. We know so little about the business of others—there is where the rub comes in. No matter in what line a man may be retailing goods, these petty annoyances confront him.

STAVING OFF COLLECTIONS.

We will call his name Jim, though that is not what they do call him. He is manager of a line yard, and by the "old man" is thought to be worth his weight in silver. He is a crack salesman, and when it comes to reliability his word goes every time. But he is not a man who would sell for cash if he could. Maybe he thinks the "old man" is so rich that it matters little whether a bill of lumber is paid

for this year or next. It isn't on record that he sells to unreliable people, but seemingly he has an idea that he is cementing himself closer and closer to his customers when he gives them plenty of latitude in the matter of payments.

On one occasion the auditor came around and showed a decided disposition to cut down the total of the accounts. Would Jim go out with him on a collecting trip? Certainly. There was a man living twenty miles from town who owed the concern a bill and off to see this man Jim and the auditor posted. They found him, the auditor broached the subject of payment and asked Jim how much the account



"Out on a collecting trip."

was. Jim, with a flourish, pulled the statement from his pocket and it called for \$3.50!

The "old man" at headquarters got it into his head that this particular yard was not keeping up with the procession in the matter of collections and provided a collector to hurry up things. Jim made the rounds with the collector, and while the latter would urge the prompt payment of the account Jim would say to them in Swede they needn't hurry a blamed bit; pay when they got a good ready!

When a man came in to settle up he thought the account was rather large.

"But it is right," said Jim.

"If you say so it is," was the rejoinder, and the amount was paid. Afterward, when looking over the figures, Jim discovered that by an error he had collected \$100 too much. Then what was to be done? His word was considered as good as law by his acquaintances, and if he should acknowledge his error the fallibility of the law would be established. So he placed the \$100 to the man's credit and said nothing. Later on this same farmer built a barn, bought the bill of Jim, and when he paid the bill the \$100 was deducted from it. He never learned that he overpaid in the first instance, neither has it been made plain to him why his barn bill cost him so little.

CHANGE IN YARD MANAGERS.

The line yard in the town had recently put in a new man, and I thought I could discern a glow on the face of the single yard man. He said in effect, the oftener that was done the better it would suit him.

The little incident opens up a great field. I could understand what the single yard man was driving at without any explanation on his part. He was thinking that the new man had no acquaintance, and that he must learn the ropes of that particular business and of the town, before he could be at his best and make much headway. Then having learned the ropes he would like him to be sent elsewhere and a new man come in who would have to learn all as did the man before him.

Selling lumber differs somewhat from selling most other lines of goods. Other things being equal, the better a yard man is acquainted in the community the more lumber he will sell. On a bill he may not bid lower than the others, but often when the bids are equal acquaintance will give him the business. I recently saw a man who had taken charge of a yard and he said he was making little effort to sell.

He was learning the people and their ways. It seems to me that the man was showing good sense.

The "drizzle trade," as a yard man called it, that is, the little trade, may to some extent go to a yard regardless of acquaintance, but when it comes to proposed buildings of any size the intentions of the builders are generally known weeks, and not infrequently months ahead. Then there is a rush for the business. The man who has been long on the ground, who knows the peculiarities, financial standing, etc., of everybody—owner, contractor, carpenter—has the inside track. He can often "work" a contractor when a new man couldn't touch him with a ten-foot measuring pole.

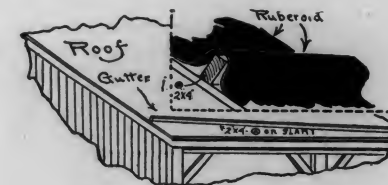
If a farmer wants to buy a suit of clothes, a pair of shoes, a bill of groceries, he goes to a store, makes his purchase and digs out for home. It is not heralded in advance that he is in the market. Such purchases are of minor consequence to buying a bill of lumber that foots up several hundred dollars.

The line yard men are not blind to this phase of the question, either. A general manager said to me his purpose was to make as few changes as possible. He understood that a good old man was much more valuable than a good new man. He said nothing about the satisfaction the change of men would give to those of his competitors who are single yard dealers, but being a bright man he no doubt kept up a thinking in that direction.

CHEAP SHED GUTTER.

If ordinarily a shed has not an eaves trough I am inclined to think that the shed proprietor would better scratch his head and see what he can find out. Sheds have been underpinned by the water that fell from the roofs. Take a shed, say 80x150 feet, and the roof turns a large amount of water into certain channels. On several occasions I have seen the pitch of the ground such that the water

from the roofs would run directly back under the lumber. What kind of troughs to use? is something of a question. Tin, while expensive, is not durable. It gets badly out of shape. Not long ago I saw a tin trough on a shed and it was so sagged that the water, filling it, ran over in a big stream. There are those who prefer a wooden trough to tin, and no doubt their heads are level. I think, however, this appliance, as illustrated, discounts either wood or tin. No claim is made that there is any originality in this style of gutter, for it is used on residences right along, but, as



"The result is a perfect gutter."

they say in patent papers, the "combination" of gutter, lumber shed and roofing material is what we are considering. The elevation may be made by a 2x4, nailed on edgewise, and then the roofing simply laid over it. That is all there is to it, and the result is a perfect gutter. On an 80-foot shed there is a slant of 24 inches, but the proprietor thinks that 20 inches would answer as well. If the shed were a longer one the water at intervals could be discharged into upright pipes.

PATENT LATH.

Recently when making one of my fashionable calls at a fine residence that had not been built a long time the hall presented a sorry sight. Several yards of plaster had fallen from the ceiling, and the good lady of the house, to use a homely expression, was in a pickle. She got scared almost

to death when it fell. When the noise was heard the hired girl rushed in the direction of it, mistook the dust for smoke and yelled that the house was on fire! Such an outcry would grate on the nerves of us big men, to say nothing about innocent, timid women. The lady explained that patent lath was used, that the kind ordered by the contractor was exhausted by the time the hall was reached, there was no more of it in town, and another make was used to finish the job. The groove in the lath had failed to hold the plaster, and down it came.

I relate this little incident, for I take it that the yard men



"Mistook the dust for smoke."

want to do things in a way that will give satisfaction. They don't want to sell a lath the conduct of which will scare women and children to death. The retail lumber dealer ought to know as many building points as any carpenter, and the best of them do. It is a part of their business. They take and read building journals, and are competent to give good advice to their customers who build. These customers may not follow this advice always, and if they don't, let them do the other thing. It is a glorious thing that when men come at us with advice we can do the other thing. As a rule, however, the intelligent man in any line is glad

of pointers at any time, and from any source. Still, we must bear in mind that the heads of all of us are not bursting with intelligence. An acquaintance of mine built a house and when showing me the plans a bit of advice was proffered. When his house was completed I asked him if he did so-and-so, and he said, "By George! I didn't think of it again after you told me."

You can see how valuable he thought my advice was! I didn't care, though. By thinking of it, and acting on it, he would have saved \$30, and had a better house than he has now. I did my duty, however, which is the main thing in life.

I cannot learn that patent lath is making any great headway. A month ago a yard man who keeps his eyes open picked up a piece of lath a foot long that he had as a sample, and said, "You see, the groove in this make of lath is too large. It holds too much mortar. When drying the edge of the groove will turn outward." A contractor made this same criticism. This contractor said the proper way to put on patent lath was "to nail it for keeps," so that the wet mortar would not warp it out of level. He also thought it was beneficial to dampen the lath before it is put on.

COST OF SELLING LUMBER.

An Ohio dealer asks if I know how much it costs to sell lumber. It is difficult to get at the maximum or minimum expense of selling lumber at retail. I have talked with many dealers on the subject, and their figures ranged from \$1.75 to \$2.50 a thousand. A big line yard concern places the figures at \$2.25, and doubtless that amount is correct in that case as the company is noted for its exact business methods. There are many yard men who do not know how much it costs to sell lumber. They make no figures to that end, and wouldn't "give a darn to know,"

as one of them expressed it. "I am making a living right along and don't care about the detail figures," he said.

One yard man figured with his stub pencil on the margin of a newspaper and said it cost him \$3.50. Knowing something about the volume of his trade, and his expenses of conducting it, I mildly suggested he might have made a mistake, but he ran over the figures again and said no. Come to find out he had put himself in at a salary. I asked him if he expected to get a salary and the profits of the business at the same time, and he said that was the way he looked at it. It isn't the way many others would look at it, however. The proprietor goes with the business; he isn't a hired man.

"Having made those figures," said a yard man, "they are not right after all, as the lumber is made to share the whole expense of the business. That leaves no allowance for selling coal, cement and lime. I believe after all that \$2 will cover it."

A dealer who is on railroad land and consequently pays no rent, summed it up as follows: Interest on \$4,000 at 7 percent, \$280; man at \$25 a month, \$300; taxes, \$65; insurance, \$40; coal for office, \$10; incidentals, \$25; total, \$720; that makes it \$1.80 a thousand. Sash and doors? No, I didn't take those into account."

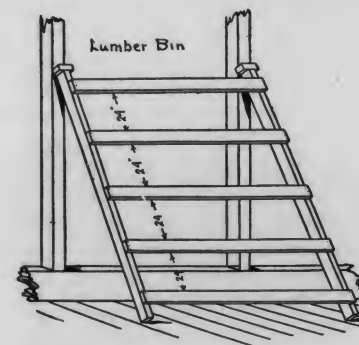
On the face of them, however, these figures are not accurate. We all know that \$25 would not cover incidentals. In any business the incidentals pile up. This man unloads on trucks from the cars, therefore he has no hauling bill. He keeps a horse, however, which he plugs around with drumming up business, and while he calls it his family horse at least half the cost of keeping him should be charged to his list of running expenses.

It may be seen from these figures which end of the horn those dealers are coming out at who get into a jolly scrap and put out lumber at cost. And really I have known dealers who thought they were not going into a very big hole if they got cost. Simply a new dollar for an old one,

they said. But it is not as much as that. It is giving away at least a good dollar for every half thousand feet of lumber sold.

TO HELP FROM CAR TO SHED.

More than half of the yard men of the country, if they had a car of lumber on one side of an alley and were going



"To do away with the middle man."

to pile the lumber in a shed on the other side, would load the boards from the car door on to a push cart, and then the push cart would be run across to the end of the pile and the lumber put in place. This big, wide ladder is to do away with the middle man, as it were. It is as wide as one bent of the shed, the sides resting firmly against the posts. A plank is placed from the car door to one of the rungs of the ladder, the shed end of the plank being elevated as the pile increases in height. It is a labor saver.

OFF TO THE BALL GAME.

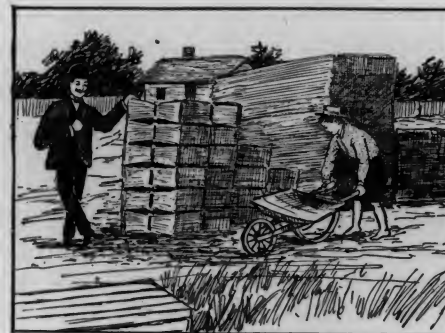
The boss, the boy said, was over where they were playing ball. Being asked where that was he pointed across the corner of the town, and said it was over beyond the farthest church. It was 3 o'clock, I did not want to walk a couple of miles, so I looked through the yard, then pulled a chair out in front of the office in the shade and amused myself with a story in the patent inside local paper. A woman drove up and asked me if I had any lime. I called to the boy through the window, but there was no response. Then I stepped to the yard entrance and gave another yell, but in vain. I said to the lady, who had her hair frizzled and wore big eyed spectacles, that I was a stranger, simply hanging around there; that once there was a boy on the premises, but I thought the earth had swallowed him up, and asked her if she would leave her order. No, she said, she wanted to take the lime right along with her and then, womanlike, she jerked on the lines and started in the direction of up town. At length the boy put in an appearance and we chatted about the town, the corn crop, base ball, and I found he was a nice kind of a boy. He said he was staying there during vacation and did not know much about the lumber business yet. "I have got where I know a barrel of cement," he said laughingly.

Then a man who looked as though he might be a well to do farmer drove up behind a good team and asked if John was handy. John is the front name of the lumberman. The boy said no, that he was over to the ball game, asked him if he could help him out, and was told that he could not. Then the man and I exchanged a few words about the corn crop and the hog market and he drove away. On meeting a stranger out here you can talk about almost anything you have a mind to, but if you don't speak of the corn crop and the price of hogs you are considered heterodox.

No. 3 was a man who when hurriedly walking past, halted and said that Jim—a carpenter as I learned—wanted "another thousand of them shingles sent right over."

"I don't know how I am going to get the shingles over," the boy remarked to me. "I suppose the man who does the draying is over to the game."

The boy's wits took the right turn, however. Going to a house near by he returned with a wheelbarrow and piling the shingles on trundled away with them. I had finished the patent inside story, so I walked around and whistled. I never let myself out musically in the whistling line when there is anybody within hearing distance, but I felt that here I was alone, and moreover the stillness was such that I wanted to punch a hole in it. It was nearly 5 o'clock when another man came along and turned into the



"He returned with a wheelbarrow."

office. I told him there was nobody at home, that the boss was over at the ball game, the boy had made a horse of himself and gone to deliver some shingles, that I was a stranger in a strange land but if I could do anything to make him happy just say the word. He listened to me with the manners of a thoroughbred gentleman, and when I had finished he said he was the boss, and asked me what he could do for me. I stuck my card into his fingers, we shook hands, he said he was glad to see me, and I of course dittoed it.

There is not much of importance in this little recital

maybe, though I think it depends on the way you look at it. In one sense I respect this man because he was out to see them twirl the sphere. I am an admirer of all outdoor sports. They are setting a new pace for the younger people of the country. If my boys go to college I want them to belong to every club that raises Cain out doors, no matter if they don't get on intimate terms with the old Greek duffers. The most of us can remember when in certain circles muscle and rugged health were separated from alleged culture. A pale face and a far-away, simple look in the eye were as desirable as it was to wear the correct shaped hoop skirt, or a pair of pants with a stripe down the leg. The first pair of pants I wore minus that stripe I thought I was hardly in fit form to be seen among men, and especially among the girls. It is impossible for any man to tell how great a benefit cycling is to us as a people. Anything that gets us out doors and makes us exercise does us good. The devil isn't half so active out of doors as he is under roofs. The present question is, however, if you would have gone away and left your lumber yard in the hands of a green boy as this man did? I will guarantee that nine-tenths of you would not. Now, possibly this dealer is so rich that he doesn't care. He may not be ambitious to build up more of a trade than he already has. I am not passing judgment on him. But as I hung around there I was putting myself in his place. I was thinking that if it was my business I would want that woman to get the lime she called for. I would want to know what that man wanted of me. He might have been thinking of building, or paying a bill. I would not want to leave the place alone while the boy was wheelbarrowing the shingles a half mile. These are only three counts, possibly minor ones, but they all developed within two hours.

There is one thing in particular that gives a business air to a place, and that is to have someone on hand to take care

of the prospective buyer. There are few business houses so arranged that a customer can visit them, press a button and go away satisfied.

EAVES TROUGHS ON SHED HOODS.

We all ought to know a good deal about open shed hoods. Not long ago I saw a hood that was not a hood as it did not extend more than three feet beyond the side of the shed. It was a new shed, too, but the owner of it had



"Rooted to the spot."

already seen the error of his ways and said if it were to do over again he would use 20 instead of 16-foot boards for the roof.

The open shed without the hood is much given to disagreeable crying. In rainy weather it will weep copious tears down the back of your neck, on the lumber that is being

loaded and unloaded; and even with a hood on, in a wet season it is not unusual to see a stretch of mud the entire length of the shed where the water from the eaves has settled. You would think that with the inventive genius of all of us we would have overcome this before this late day, wouldn't you? But we seem not to have done so. In the yard in which I saw the appliance the hood projected over the driveway to the scales, and the eaves trough was attached to enough of the roof to protect the scales and the approach to them. The yard man took me into the yard to show me his stock of lumber, but when I got as far as this eaves trough I was "glued to the spot," as the old time novelist was wont to put it. I could see several stocks of lumber every day, but an eaves trough on a shed was not so common.

To erect these eaves troughs is easily done. A board a foot wide or less nailed to the ends of the rafters, another board of a like width so nailed to this board as to form a right angle, pieces of band-iron fastened to the edge of this last board and thence to the roof as a support, and it is done. It strikes me that the idea appeals to all the common sense that a man has.

A BILL IN DETAIL WANTED.

I heard a yard man complaining about a shortage in a lot of sheathing he had received. The bill called for 3,500 feet when actually there were several hundred feet less than that amount. The stuff was of several lengths, beginning with 10 feet, and from that up.

It will probably transpire that this man has some other dealer's sheathing, and that some other dealer has the stuff ordered by him. Mistakes occur in the best of families, it is said, and no doubt they occur in the best of lumber yards, wholesale as well as retail. With a force of men loading from trucks several cars at the same time, it would be surprising if now and then there was not placed in one car

lumber that was intended for another. Several cases of this kind have been brought to my notice. Sometimes the mistakes do not amount to much one way or the other, and at others they represent a good many dollars. A yard man told me that he received lumber that was worth \$100 more than his bill called for. He notified the shippers that they had made a mistake in filling his order, and they were inclined to take the view of it that some ticket sellers—rail-road and circus—take when they are told they do not give the right change back. Then he wrote them that he could stand it if they could, which led them to believe that the



"A force of men loading from trucks."

mistake was in his favor, and on investigation it was shown that two orders were mixed when loading.

"I have informed the house of the shortage in the sheathing," said the yard man, "and I suppose I will get a letter telling me there were several lengths, and that I may have overlooked some of it. It was simply billed 3,500 feet of sheathing. To get at what there was I had to sort up. Now the way to have billed that sheathing would have been so many pieces of 10 feet, so many of 12, and so on. Then it would have taken me no time to have counted up and compared with the invoice."

You undoubtedly have discovered that there is a wide difference in different yards in their systems of billing. There are men who if they could would make one scratch of a pen pass for a bill of goods. There are men who will avoid the physical exertion of swinging a pen as there are those who will avoid digging ditches. I have helped to mark goods when it took all sorts of fiddling around, and even some guessing, to find out what was what. Especially in dry goods confusion often arises from a generalized bill. Then there are bill clerks who itemize in their bills, giving trade numbers, and even colors when it may make things clearer. I once heard a billing clerk reproved for using his pen too little when making out bills. He said that was the way he was taught at the business college. The reply that "A man isn't worth hades room in actual business who can't get above business college methods" was characteristic of the man who said it, and I think, too, it contained a big grain of sense. When we measure everything by the rules of some particular school rest assured we will fall flat at some point. What we need to do is to get above and beyond schools.

LUMBER'S FLIGHT.

We don't know a thing until we find it out, and we never find it out until we have the opportunity. There is no getting around that proposition. It may sound silly but if you sit up all night you can't get around it. I have met yard men right along who saw no reason for the advance in lumber. Every little while up she would go another notch, and every time these yard men would say in a disgusted way, "There she goes again! Them blasted, bloated lumbermen up north are the microbes which are raising the trouble." To find out all about the condition, and to tell you just as it is, was the reason I put on a fresh boiled shirt and struck out for Minneapolis.

To go from a country where the prevailing noise is the

grunt of the hog, into a great, bustling city that roars day and night, and where the chimes in some tower wake you up every quarter hour, is a change that marks an epoch, as it were, in a quiet life. A countryman hardly knows what to make of it, or how to act. After wading mud ever since the snow went off, and then all at once for a fellow to find himself on asphalt pavement that is swept every day makes him almost feel that surely he is on his way to paradise. To be able to see the pretty things in the store windows, buy peanuts on the corners, sleep in a hotel bed where the sheets are changed every day, is bewitching, and I was inclined to think I would like to stay right along with them; but at the same time do you know the people in the great cities are longing to get out where every morning we brush the dew from the grass with our brogans when we are attending to our chores? Said one great lumberman, whose thought you would think were far, far above such common things, "I should like to come down there, lie around for a week and see the corn grow."

I told him to come on, that we would fill him up on bacon and johnny cake, and if he felt like taking a new form of exercise he could tie his old wheel up to the hitching post and hoe in my garden.

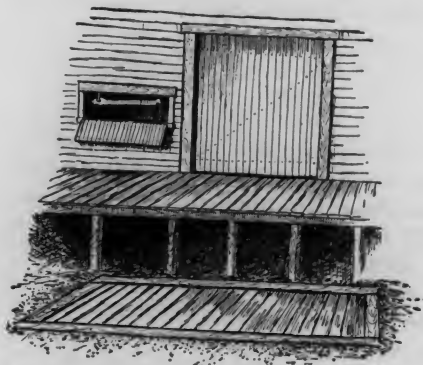
So our tastes differ. We country gentlemen pine for the cities, while the city dudes would like to make a break for rural life. At noon today, in the restaurant, a girl brought me spring lamb with some kind of grass sprinkled over it, and the girl was so homely that honestly I wouldn't marry her if you would give me 20 cents. That is no reason why she should despair, however, for the time will come when some fellow will marry her for nothing. It is owing to our diversified tastes that all of us find a place in life. These tastes get us married to sweet girls when nobody else would have us, and so adjust matters that this turns out to be a pretty good old world after all.

You can take my word for it that the manufacturers have on their highest heeled pumps, and go around with big

feathers in their hats, and metaphorically pounding big base drums. They are happy. I felt it in the air as soon as I reached St. Paul. There is plenty of ozone in the air up there; too, they sell beer and such things, and a country Jake has to mind his eye else he may find himself falling headfirst over the high cliffs into the mighty Mississippi. The advance of lumber was mixed up with these other sensations. A lumberman asked me out to have a glass of lemonade, and while we were sucking it through straws he said the present condition of the lumber market beat anything he had ever seen. "Why," said he, "the stock of low grade lumber is dangerously depleted."

A NOVEL LIME HOUSE.

A young and hustling Illinois concern has built a lime house that is entirely out of the ordinary. There was an effort to combine every good quality that any lime house



"A lime business calls for every convenience."

may possess. In the first place these dealers knew that lime keeps best in a tight room. They sell bulk lime largely if not entirely, and sell a great deal of it. There have been

days when they have sold enough to fill a car. A lime business of such volume calls for every convenience in handling.

The house inside is funnel shaped, gravity bringing the lime down directly in front of the door, where it is handled with the shovel. The outside door is 4x6 feet, slides upward, and two feet back is another door of a like size. When the house is filled this inside door can be slightly raised and the movement of the lime thus gauged.

The scale beams are set in the wall, and when the door which incloses them is shut it is flush with the side of the building. The platform is just high enough to accommodate a wagon. These yard men say they can now handle lime with some comfort. In their former location and with their old style lime house there were men who would quit their jobs rather than act as lime purveyors. They would not put up with the lime filling their eyes, noses, mouths, ears and sifting down their backs.

OUR LITTLE DIFFERENCES.

No matter how apparently simple a business is, there are new complications arising all the time. Merely to sell lumber—the novice would think it was nothing to do that; still, if he were to take a hand in it he would find plenty of nuts to crack. There seems to be botheration by the peck all along the line, not only in the lumber business but in every business. In lumber the wholesale man worries the retailer, the consumer worries the retailer, and it must be confessed that at times the retailer worries the wholesaler. We needn't all die on that account, however. If we take it coolly we will sail along fairly well, and life after all will seem worth living.

"The higher lumber goes the more particular the retail men are getting," a salesman said to me. That may be so in a case or two, but I don't believe it holds generally true. Too many of us are apt to judge the many by the few.

What if I had said to this man, "The higher lumber goes the finer the wholesale men do their grading. They are bound to get all the money out of it possible." That would not have been a very nice remark for me to make, would it? It would have been just as nice as the one he made, though. I do not like to see blame attached where it does not belong. Neither the wholesale nor retail men are angels yet, and will not be before they get through selling lumber here.

This agent talked as though the yard men around the country were sitting up nights in order to find some fault



"The gang that was playing euchre."

with the shipments made to them these days. It is foolish to talk like that. There is a host of yard men who know their business, and they are going to enter no complaint so long as they are treated right. These men go on year after year doing business with wholesale lumbermen and there is no friction that enters into the deals. On the other hand, I am bound to say "there are others," for there are retail men who know very little about lumber, and again there are those whose conscience would not be stretched to an aching point if they should get the better of a wholesale man, or anybody else. I am speaking of the exception to the rule now, how-

ever. If a man felt it in his soul that he was cut out for a scalawag, and wanted to follow the calling, he could find a more prolific field than retailing lumber.

To go to the other branch of the trade: The northern country is full of wholesale men from whom I should expect perfectly fair treatment. That is not saying that in every case I should expect a satisfactory shipment. Fair treatment and satisfactory shipments do not go together always. I may receive a miserable lot of lumber in a shipment, but if the shipper makes it right, cheerfully and readily correcting all errors, I am receiving from him fair treatment. You and I—just as good as we are—make mistakes, and when we do so it would not please us to have somebody come back at us and howl that we are dishonest. If a shipment from a wholesale man is not according to Hoyle, but he stands ready to make it so, no blame can be attached to him.

I recently saw a part of a car of thick stuff that the yard man said was not what he bargained for. So he entered a protest. Now, there is this peculiarity in human nature: Almost any man, while he would admit that he is liable to make some mistakes, does not think he has made them until it is proved to him. Take a wholesale man, for instance, who aims to be as straight as a string; if occasion required he would say, "Of course, any of us are liable to make mistakes." He has, say, fifty men working in his yard, some of them with skulls as thick as an ape's. I have noticed it is often very difficult to convince that man that a mistake has been made in his shipments unless it is shown to him in black and white. Take that car of thick stuff. I don't believe the wholesale dealer intentionally sent it to the yard man. It is preposterous to think he did. In the first place he isn't that kind of a man, and in the second place if he was he would know that the yard man to whom the shipment was made was not the kind of hairpin to receive such lumber. He knows what lumber is, and when he buys a certain grade he is going to get it; else he doesn't pay. Under these circumstances you see how shortsighted it would have

been in the wholesale man knowingly to have shipped an off grade. It would simply be courting trouble with his eyes open. No doubt a cog slipped in the yard somewhere. Maybe the foreman was so blind drunk he couldn't see straight that day. Maybe the night before he had been up until 4 o'clock with his best girl and there were so many sticks in his eyes that he couldn't tell a pin hole from a post hole.

Several of us have faced these conditions. The man who goes on duty every day in the year with a clear mind and a bright eye is a jewel as men run. We are so fond of our toddy, pink teas and balls that we put in hours elsewhere when we ought to be at home and in bed. As a result of this waste of nerve force we make mistakes, have lapses and show bad temper. I once heard a business man say that he believed the theater had knocked him out of dollars and dollars. He had a passion for theaters just as some men have for strong drink. He was a hard worker, it was necessary for him to be at his place of business early in the morning, he rarely got home before 12 o'clock at night; maybe his stomach would have beer and fried oysters in it; he did not get rest enough, and as a consequence he was less alive to business chances than otherwise he would have been. That is why he thought the theater had been a drawback to him, financially, and no doubt it had been.

When the yard man kicked on that thick stuff the wholesale man said it was queer that such a mistake should be made. The yard man offered a certain amount for the car, but the shipper said, "O, no; not this year!"

"Take your old lumber, then," replied the yard man.

Then a man came on to inspect the lumber, and he found that the yard man was right in every particular, and he said he would go home and advise the "old man" to accept the yard man's offer, as he considered it all the lumber was worth. Here is where the beauty of the deal comes in: The yard man does not blame the "old man" up north one iota. He said to me he knew the "old man" was all right,

and I know a good deal about the "old man" myself, and would trust him with my purse in the dark. Now, that is the way to get along. If I had heard the yard man say that the "old man" was a no such thing I would have told him that I thought he was mistaken; that the "old man" didn't know any more about that shipment of lumber than I did, and I would bet my hat on it. I think I know what kind of a reply the yard man will get from that manufacturer up north. The shipper will accept the yard man's offer for the lumber, and in addition apologize for the trouble the yard man has been put to. Then everything will be lovely again. The next time they meet they will shake hands, smoke together, and go right on and buy and sell lumber.

That is the way we must get along with our differences if we can. Above all, don't get warm under the necktie. If a shipment is not right, having informed the men who made it, you can tell pretty well from the tone of their letter whether there was an intentional wrong.

I recently saw a lot of lath that was as bad as it is made, and the yard man went at the shipper hammer and tongs. I doubt if he took the right course. No wholesaler on earth could have forced him to accept such lath as that; therefore why didn't he keep his shirt on? If he had there is no knowing but he could have settled for the lath on a basis of kindling wood prices. A hot headed man is not a bargain maker. He slops all over the county. The minute we get mad all the fool there is in us comes right to the surface.

A CASE OF SCREENS.

A few weeks ago mention was made of a company down in Maine that has built up an immense business in screen windows and doors. Its market is in the territory east of the Rockies, and possibly also west of them. My attention was first called to this company when I was building a little

shanty of my own. My screen business was solicited several times, I hearing from the company by letter, circular and booklets. Its trade literature was remarkable for the elegance with which it was gotten up. The highest art of the printer had been expended on it. The impression would be: The concern that sends this stuff out is up to snuff; no slouchy concern would do it.

Evidently there are sash and door men who were interested in this account, as two of them have asked me for further information. One of them said he never before had heard of the Maine concern, and presumably the other had not. Several yard men also have shown an interest in the matter, and they all told me they had never heard of the company that was doing this immense specialty business. Very likely the reason they have not heard of the company is that it sells to the consumer direct. We don't like these fellows—of course we don't—and I am doing my best to initiate you into their methods of doing business so that you may enjoy some of the screen traffic they are taking from your territory. And one of their principal methods is to hustle for the business!

When stopping at a large hotel, on going to my room the first thing that attracted my attention was the screen on which was stamped the name of this Maine company. I jerked it out about as lively as I could and looked it over. I tell you it is a fine screen, unlike the bungling affairs which are turned out from a hundred and one establishments throughout the country. Yet this thought came to me: What sense is there in making a bungling screen? With the material at hand and tools to work with any fair mechanic ought to make a screen that is not bungling. If I were a maker of screen windows and doors and turned out such work as is turned out by many I would get hold of one of these down east screens and learn how to save lumber and make a trim looking screen that would please the eye.

The next morning I said to the landlord that I had slept like a top; that there were no mosquitos buzzing around me

as there were the night before, and that his house seemed to be nicely screened. He said he thought it was, and then, without further ado, like a gentleman and scholar, he went on and told the whole story. "There are 202 openings; 180 windows and 22 doors," he said. "The cost was an even \$300, fixtures included. The doors, you see, are oak frames, and the window frames are pine. The concern sent a man here to take the measurements, and he was 'onto' his job, I can tell you. Every window and door fitted perfectly, it not being necessary to take a shaving from one of them. I call it a perfect job."

That was as good information as I wanted to get in one day. After breakfast I made straight for the local inside finishing factory and, knowing the proprietor pretty well, I could talk with him in a way that I couldn't with a stranger. He said he had just answered a letter from a builder who complained of tardiness in filling his order. Two years ago, he said, he had had no such trouble. "I wrote him," said the factory man, "that there was this difference: Two years ago I was looking for jobs while now jobs are looking for me at such a rate that I can hardly take care of them." He said he had made a pile of screen doors this season, many of them with cypress frames. He dropped into the use of cypress almost by accident. Being pushed for material and having some cypress on hand, he had run it in, and the result was highly satisfactory. It stays in place better than some other kinds of wood, he said, and he would lay in another stock when his present one was exhausted.

"While you are doing such a rushing business in screens, why didn't you get the job of screening the So-and-so hotel?" I asked him. He said he had noticed the screens were in, but did not know who got the job, and when I told him it was the Maine company for an instant there was a look in his eye as though he had slipped a cog.

"Do you know how much they cost and how many openings there are?" he queried. Giving him the information

he wanted, he took his pencil from behind his ear and, sitting on the platform, figured on a piece of board. "I would have done the job for from \$200 to \$225—the last named figure at the outside," he said.

"Did you go for the job?" I asked.

"No, I didn't," said he.

There was the old, old story, especially in the screen line—no effort was made to get the work and a smart outsider slid in and took it at higher than local rates.

SHOULD HE SELL HEMLOCK?

A dealer asks if in my opinion it would be a good idea for him to carry hemlock as well as pine. He says he has no doubt as to the superiority of hemlock as a framing timber; his competitors do not carry it, and should he put it in stock he thinks he could talk it in a way that would increase his sales. I have not the pleasure of the acquaintance of this yard man, having never visited the town in which he is located, know nothing about his competitors and nothing about the class of people to whom he sells; therefore any reply is liable to be at random, but I will pull the trigger and let 'er go.

There are two kinds of merchants in the retail field; in fact there are more than two, but we will say there are two, as that will answer the purpose. The policy of one of these kinds is to use as small capital in his business as possible. It is not his intention to educate his customers up to anything; sell them what they want, and keep only what they are liable to call for. Many of these men pass for and are good business men in their way. They get along well, die rich and arrange in their wills to have tall monuments mark their resting places. These men were not born merchants, however. Had their lots been cast in a big city, say in the dry goods business, where the volume of trade depends on the variety that is kept, on the effort to lead

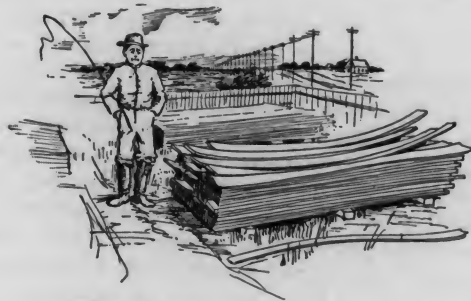
people to believe that they stood in need of certain goods because they were in fashion or cheap, they would have been eating almshouse soup in six months. They cannot meet that kind of competition.

I want to repeat what has been said before, namely, that you cannot point to a retail lumberman who has gotten anywhere near the top who kept a small stock during the process of climbing. The highest degree of success and a small stock never go together. I know a dealer in a one-yard town who thought he was performing this miracle; his trade was large, his profits good and he sold his lumber about as fast as it arrived. But he slipped a cog. All the time there was a worm gnawing at the vitals of his business. We don't notice these worms at first, but they gnaw and gnaw, and the first we know they have punctured our tire. It is surprising how quickly things get noised about. The story got abroad that this man was doing a big business but that he did not keep in stock enough lumber to meet the demands of his trade, and the first he knew, as from a clear sky, kerslap went in another yard alongside of him. The world is full of people who are going to jump in and take our trade away from us if they can. Then this yard man gnashed and wailed his teeth, as the Irish orator said, but the damage was done. He is now perhaps selling a third of the lumber that he was putting out two years ago, his hated rival having taken the lion's share of the business. Had he been so inclined he could have traced the cause of No. 2 yard direct to his business methods. By his effort to squeeze through on the smallest capital possible he wrung the neck of the goose that laid the golden egg.

The other kind of merchant is a different kind. Go into a town of any size, ask for the leading lumberman, and you will not find him presiding over a stock of 300,000 feet of lumber. He isn't selling peanuts. If he is unable to furnish a barn bill to a farmer who wants it quickly he pulls down his vest and says he will not be caught in that fix again. I have often heard it said: "If you double your

stock and carry both pine and hemlock you must nearly double your investment." True enough, but what of it? That is the question; what of it? If you have no money to invest don't do it—that is plain enough—but if you have the money and are working to establish a business that shall stay by you like a brother; that shall cause to be spread abroad the news that it is your aim to carry a stock that will meet any reasonable demand; that shall keep competition at a distance—in short, that you may be master of the situation, I have never learned of any way but to put money into the undertaking.

I will concede that it is none of my business whether



"To such treatment it will object."

a yard man doubles up on his stock to any extent or not. This is a free country, and he can do as he likes in the matter. It does seem to me, however, that a merchant is under some obligations to his customers; that it is his duty as well as business to provide for them a reasonable assortment of goods from which to select. That is certainly the mission of a merchant.

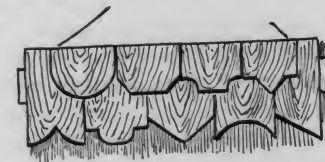
If this yard man is disposed to handle hemlock he will find it an admirable framing timber. I do not believe that for this purpose it has a superior. It will cling to a nail as though it loved it. Its merits will stand all that an eloquent man can reasonably say about them. It is well enough to

take a little care in handling it, though. It is hardly equal to pine for roughing it. I should not think of piling hemlock dimension out doors provided I had a suitable shed in which to put it. Under cover it will retain its shape and color as well as pine. Do not permit it to be abused by alternately submitting it to rain and sun. To such treatment as that it will object.

Hemlock is being sold more and more, averaging in price about \$2 less than pine of a corresponding grade. If I were building a house I would not pay that difference unless my carpenter overruled me. I did build a ranch and he overruled me, but I would not let him do it the next time. He said it would require so much more time to work hemlock that it would make up in the difference in price, but I have thought since he successfully worked me, preferring to do that to working hemlock.

A SHINGLE DISPLAY.

If there is any good reason why the wares of the lumberman should not be as systematically displayed as are those of the dry goods man or clothier speak right up and tell us. I sometimes think that we fellows who sell lumber are not alive to the businesslike methods of our brother



"In plain sight the patterns of shingles."

merchants in other lines. Of course you are alive to all these methods. I am speaking of the yard man over in the next county.

There is the little item of fancy shingles. In only one

office have I seen a display of these shingles which does credit to the man who did it. As a rule any old way is good enough. In one office a couple of shingles were on the window sill and another pattern was lying on the rail which divided the bookkeeper's department from the outside world. Evidently not long ago the question of fancy shingles had been raised and these samples brought in for the examination of the possible purchaser. The probability is that this possible purchaser was a woman who had a desire to see the different patterns, and if that be so you are safe to wager she wondered why the yard man did not have these shingles where he could put his hand on them the minute she asked him about them. With a stock of fancy shingles, molding, brackets, head blocks, spindles etc. a man who has an office in which there is any room may make a display which would lead a would-be buyer to think that the man who is selling lumber is not ashamed to show his goods.

To make such an arrangement of fancy shingles as is illustrated take any strip of wood, a lath for instance, tack the shingles to it, following out any arrangement of patterns which may appeal to your taste, tie a string to both ends of the stake, drive a nail in the wall and hang the shingles up. You will then have in plain sight the patterns of shingles you have and can quickly show them to anyone who may contemplate their use. The material for this rack will not cost a cent and the shingles can be tacked to the strip and hung on the wall in ten minutes any time. It beats fishing samples out from under the desk or safe or running to the shed every time a customer mentions a fancy shingle.

KNOWING ONE'S BUSINESS.

A Minnesota yard man writes that a farmer bought some coal of him and then proceeded to tell him where the coal came from, how it is handled and other information, all of which made the yard man feel like a 2x4 for the reason

that a granger could come into his office and instruct him to such an extent regarding an article he was handling. He says, "Now, I am not going to admit that I am the only western retailer who knows little about the exact location of the mines producing the different kinds of hard and soft coal, or the kind that combines the qualities of both. Why doesn't some coal company put out information on this subject? It could be given on a leaflet, calendar or blotting pad, and I sincerely believe it would prove a good advertisement."

We will leave the suggestion with the coal dealers; what interests me is to know that this yard man is so touched when he discovers that some man outside his line knows more than he does about an article he sells. It will probably be no balm to his wounded feelings to say in his hearing that he stands with the big majority. That does not help him out any. Coal in the most of the lumber yards is regarded as incidental; that is, lumber is first and coal drops in as an adjunct. The wonder is, however, there are so many lumber dealers located in this western country of broad prairies who know so little regarding the manufacture of the boards they are selling every work day of the year. Many of them have never visited a saw mill. A yard man who has sold lumber for years incidentally told me he had no idea what a commercial saw mill was like, further than that he had seen pictures of it.

I heard a yard man when selling a bill of lumber to a farmer—a good sized bill it was, too—dilate on the way his lumber was manufactured. He told the farmer that the most of his stock came from a certain concern, with an air that carried with it the idea that on that account the stock was superior; and then he went on to tell about the process of manufacture, how the logs were hauled out of the water with the bull chain and how fast the saw would walk through them. The farmer listened attentively—it was, in fact, opening up a new world to him—and no doubt he thought the lumber came from the greatest establishment on earth! How

much this recital had to do with selling the bill of lumber I don't know; I do believe, however, that it made a most favorable impression on the mind of the buyer and that he left the premises believing that the yard man knew his business. And, beloved, if we can get that impression abroad we have taken a long step forward. For us it is worth money for the public to think that we know our business. If the typewriter on which I am whacking off these words gets out of order to whom is it taken? To the mechanic who, in my opinion, knows his business. If you want a pair of shoes made, a suit of clothes; want the services of a lawyer, a physician, you go to the man who knows his business, don't you? No man has ever known too much about his business, and it is possible for him to know so little that his ignorance will trip him.

The junketing trips which, following retail association meetings, have been made by the association members have been educators. On these occasions there are yard men who went through mills who had never seen them before, and when looking over these mills they were literally reading up on their business.

THE MAN IN THE YARD.

If you have a competent man in your yard you are in high luck. I walked through a yard that was in fine order. A second look to find something that was out of shape, or place—broken lath, or boards pitched into a corner or under the piles was unsuccessful. And by the way, this pitching of stuff under the piles to get it out of the way makes me think of the slovenly habit we men at times have of throwing our old boots and soiled shirts under the bed.

"Good yard man, have you?" the proprietor was asked. "In some respects," was the reply. "He is the best man I ever had to keep stock in shape, but his memory isn't an inch long." I readily inferred what that meant. It meant

that Tom Jones might buy a bundle of lath, or possibly a thousand feet of boards, and they never would be charged.

Above all things the man in the yard should have a good memory. If he have not there is something that is going to get away from him. If I had an income equal to the value of the material which goes out of the retail yards of the country uncharged you would not catch me roaming around this winter sleeping in cold hotel beds and trying to chew beefsteak that is nearly as tough as I am. I would have a mansion on Easy street, eat baby mushrooms and drink champagne from bottles which had the cobwebs of ages on them. An excellent retail man—a man who aims to keep tab on everything connected with his business—



"Sleeping in cold hotel beds."

was telling me how many slips a former yard man of his made. One of his little mistakes was to let a whole load of shingles go out uncharged. In a hundred and one yards in which less caution is taken that load of shingles would have been a dead loss.

In an office in Ohio the bookkeeper's window overlooks the driveway that enters the yard. Nobody can go out or in without attracting the attention of the man in front of the window, and he is supposed to make a minute of every team that leaves the yard with lumber and every man who carries away a stick on his back. This looks somewhat like state prison methods, but it saves dollars.

Right here I want to tell you of a queer duck I once knew. Financially he was perfectly responsible, bought his household necessities and luxuries on credit but never paid a cent until a bill was presented. When we had our feet on the same table and were pulling away at cigars, in a burst of confidence he said he was aware that first and last many items were omitted from his bills. He said it "paid" him to run accounts. This man is of course a villain, though no doubt he would excuse himself by saying that he had paid promptly every cent of indebtedness that was presented to him. He was simply taking advantage of the lapses which occur in more than nine-tenths of the retail mercantile establishments.

The determination of a good yard boss to see that a record of every article that leaves the yard is turned in at the office I should call one of the first qualifications.

It sometimes comes to me that we expect too much of our yard men. If they are not thoroughly posted on grades we cannot forgive them. We expect them to keep the stock in fine shape. We look for them to show tact as salesmen. We rebel when they omit to charge. If in a line yard they must be competent to look after liens and collections. And all these qualities we expect to buy for how much? For \$40 a month, not infrequently. The trouble comes in, however, when we do not buy them for that amount, or for any other amount, for often it seems an impossibility to get them combined at any price. I know a yard man who is paid close to \$2,500 a year and he is worth every cent of it. He has the whole group of qualifications and it follows that he is a jewel.

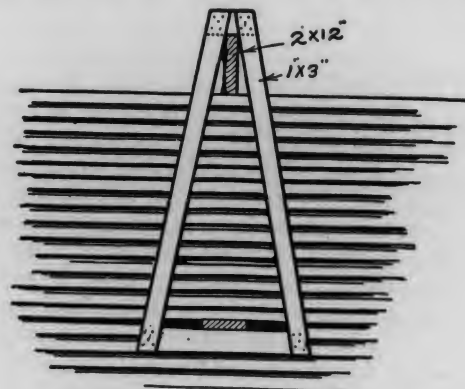
I like to get away from the boss and talk with the employees. They will at times tell me more than the boss will. A pleasure to me at any time is to associate with intelligent workmen; men who have brains yet do not seek to live by their wits. First and last some of these employees unload their woes on me. Last fall when the weather would permit of sitting out on lumber piles and whittling a young

man in a yard asked me if I knew where he could better his condition. He said he "worked like a dog" at wages that seemed to him inadequate. Then I had to tell him frankly that if I were running a yard and a man should want the position of yard manager and should tell me that he had the capacity to work like a dog it would not be considered a recommendation. I told him that it is a good thing to be industrious but if our brains do not supplement the work of our hands we are the next thing to goners. I explained the best I could the qualifications of a successful yard man and I trust a little light drifted through the crevice that was rent. He evidently had an idea that to tear around, keep busy, lift his inwards out, was what was expected of a yard man. It is not these but it is knowledge, care, watchfulness, loyalty, civility. Why, I would no sooner trust a customer of mine in the hands of some yard men than I would trust my old violin to be repaired by a boiler maker. I have seen something of this. I have seen yard men handle customers as indifferently as though they were so many sticks. I saw a yard man so gruff, so decidedly unpleasant, that I thought the customer was at fault that he did not turn on his heels. If I were paying my money I wouldn't stand and have it rubbed into me by anybody.

A PILE BINDER.

The cost of this little device for holding the tops of piles on is really so small that it can hardly be estimated. Any man around a yard could knock together an armful of them in no time. You will see it is a triangle, except that it is hardly a triangle. I have forgotten what it would be called in geometry. That is the way with us. We deprive ourselves of wine and mushrooms in order that we may get through school or college and then industriously forget nearly everything we learned there.

This triangle shaped "duphunny" is made of, say, 3-inch strips. The top is just wide enough to hold a 2x12 from falling over. In length it may be made to suit you. To bind the pile place the 2x12 piece on edge across the top of it.



"This duphunny is made of 3-inch strips."

hang a triangle on each end, pull it down with considerable force and immediately over the base of the triangle thrust a stick between the courses of lumber.

INADEQUATE OFFICE AND YARD HELP.

The boss was up town and would probably be gone the rest of the afternoon, the young man said who was left in charge. This young man was a nice appearing fellow, quick, intelligent and gentlemanly, but I could see he had not so thoroughly learned the business that he could wade through it as he will be able to a year or two hence. The little office was simply overrun. At one time there were three men waiting to pay their bills; a farmer, whose team stood on the platform of the scales, wanted coal; another said the siding he bought did not hold out and he wanted

the rest of it; a drayman was waiting for coal and your humble servant was principally engaged in toasting his shins.

The young man was attending to matters as fast as he could. One man was in doubt concerning some items in his bill, and of course checking it up took time. The farmer with the big nose said if he couldn't be attended to he would go to one of the other yards. You have probably observed that big nosed people are rather independent. Napoleon cared little how many battalions of men he sacrificed if thereby his interests were furthered, and ever since his time a certain class of noses have been named after him; or "for" him, as the dude literary fellows write it these days. A man with a little nose will do most anything for you if you only take him right, but he with the Napoleonic beak is not going to stand out in front of your office or any other man's office and kick his toes to keep them warm, in the meantime thinking that his hogs at home are squealing for their grub, when he can drive half a block to another yard, load up and be off. He paid cash, too, and these cash customers, nose or no nose, are more or less independent.

The young man had a fair grasp of the situation. When the farmer threatened to go elsewhere the young man took the weight of his wagon and directed him to bin No. 3. Now of course it is not the thing to ask any customer to do his own loading. He may help to do it if he is so inclined, but when he is the whole push behind the scoop shovel no yard man can expect it to set well on his stomach. I sat right where I could see the farmer do the loading and he filled his wagon box with chunks exclusively. When such chunks could not be reached from the door he went inside and dug them out. You would prefer that a man would not do that in your bin, wouldn't you? It is liable to breed discontent in the minds of the next customers. I guess we all have fine coal enough in our soft coal bins. When a customer gets a few big chunks a little fine coal does not make so much of a showing, but if there are no

large pieces to leaven the fine coal—some of it almost pulverized—it looks like ornery stuff. Probably you or I would not have the cheek to load up in that way; still it would depend on the size and shape of our noses.

The farmer paid for his coal and drove away, evidently satisfied with his bargain. No doubt at any time he would exchange a little muscular effort for his pick from a soft coal pile. The two men who were waiting while the account of the other was being checked up were uneasy. When we go into a business house on such a mission as that it is natural to think that somebody around the premises ought to have time to take our money. I helped the young man out all I could by encircling the waiting men with my charms, as it were, though I put my foot in it once or twice. One of the men looked like a farmer and I asked him how his corn was this year, and he said he was a carpenter and had no corn. I told a couple of campaign stories, one a rub on the democrats and the other a rub on the republicans, so it would be sure to hit them both. And thus we passed the time very pleasantly until the other fellow was out of the way. In less than five minutes these two men handed in more than \$300, turned up their coat collars and departed.

When it came to the customer who was short on siding the young man was not perfectly at home at first. The boss himself had loaded the lumber and naturally the young man was not anxious to give the customer 250 feet and then when the boss came in tell him that he didn't know enough to count out a bill of siding. I could see that plainly enough. The customer could not have been more positive if he had tried. He had put the siding on and it did not cover the space! He was asked if he measured it before it was laid and he said he did not. This farmer drove a fine, large team, wore a fur overcoat that must have cost as much as \$50, and a man does not want to ruffle extensively the feelings of a customer who is fixed like that. The young man did the only thing he could under the circumstances, namely, said he didn't know a thing about it, but told the customer

to take the siding along and the boss would see that it was made all right.

The drayman loaded his own coal while other customers entertained the young man in the office. It was hard coal the drayman wanted, however, and no doubt he took it as it came. There is nothing in picking the largest chunks from hard coal.

In the experience of the yard this may have been an unusually busy day, though it is my understanding it is a concern that does a good business. The young man did not act as though it was anything out of the ordinary for him to hustle along alone in such a manner. Of course it is not for you or me to dictate whether this lumberman shall have one or two men to help him, but to a man looking down from the ceiling it appears as though he was running short-handed at an expense that he couldn't stand. When I first went to the office it was vacant, the young man being in the yard. One man came in and, seeing no one but a no-account looking fellow sitting behind a cigar reading a newspaper, went out. He wanted something, else he would not have been there. I cannot believe that is the way to run a business. Such methods do not apply to lumber any more than they apply to dry goods or meat markets. Little neglects to customers finally sour them; and, beloved, we want to keep them sweet. It is impossible to keep them too sweet. We want to make ourselves and our business methods so attractive that customers will flock around us. That is the way to get trade and to keep it. Any other methods first or last get the knockout blow under the ear. The insignificant little fly that hangs around the sugar bowl should teach us a lesson.

GETTING OUT MILL WORK.

"The rush is over now," the yard man remarked, "but I wish you would remind the sash and door factories that one thing necessary for them to do is to estimate promptly when we send them specifications. If not satisfied with the bid of the first house to which these specifications are submitted we must try again, and if they hang fire in the factories it takes a good while to reach a conclusion. We can't ask the men in these factories to work nights and Sundays, but it has been my experience that some of them are woefully slow."



"Some of them are woefully slow."

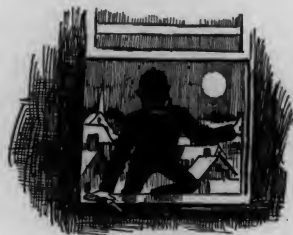
A similar complaint I have heard several times. It is a question, however, if the factories could be speedy enough to meet the requirements of the average yard man in this matter. Suppose I am to furnish a house bill the mill work of which will cost, say, \$1,000. The furnishing of this bill is one of the big events of the season to me. I may not sell four such bills during the year. I want to get at the denouement, as the Frenchman would say, in short order. I am hoping that if I mail my specifications today the estimates

may be returned about the third day, notwithstanding my letter must travel a hundred miles or more and the answer to it a like distance. I am a little unreasonable in this expectation and of course slip up in my calculations. That deal is a big thing to me, but it isn't going to stun the factory men; they are used to such things. They get bundles of these specifications. The proprietor of a factory told me recently they had sixty sets of stairs on their order books. In these big establishments we must take our turn, and sometimes there is a small army ahead of us.

If I had a bill of mill work that amounted to any great sum I would not send it to anybody. I would ask the factories to send their men to me. I would want them to send men who knew their business, too, so that right on the ground every detail could be settled. If this is not done, at some stage of the game some seemingly little insignificant thing is liable to stick its nose in and cause trouble without end. Not long ago I looked through a fine residence that had been built by a yard man for his home, and he told me how little concern his mill work was to him. Everything went together as though fate had decreed it, he said. Not even a bit of molding was lacking. To start with the order was placed with an A1 factory, and then the salesman who took the order knew his business. He has been a practical planing mill man, knows what is wanted and in what shape it should be furnished. I know salesmen who can detect any faulty point in the specifications of an architect. That is the kind of men to have around you. When you are figuring with them they are not firing their ideas up through their hats. They are down to earth, which is an excellent place for any of us to be. When you are dealing with a good house and a competent salesman there is not a reason why things should not dovetail.

I like these inside finish salesmen; I have had about as good times with some of them as a fellow can reasonably expect to have this side of paradise, but not every one of them is making it the smoothest possible sailing for the

builder. Sometimes they innocently prod him and make him frisk like a wild steer. I was told the other day of a fine residence that was going up and everything came to a halt because the salesman who took the order blundered. The mill work came on, but a small portion of the bill had to be refilled, which took time. In a busy building season carpenters can't hang around doing nothing and pay their meat and grocery bills on anticipation, so in this case the carpenters went elsewhere. Then when the revised mill work came the carpenters didn't come with it. The builder got madder than hops, the contractor got mad, and all because the salesman wasn't "onto" his job. When we slip a cog we never know how many cogs it will cause to slip in the



"A thief breaks in."

machinery of others. It is like the wave which keeps on rolling, rolling away from the agitation caused by the pebble.

If I were building an expensive house (of which there is not much danger) I should want to have a good seance with a salesman who knew the ropes. I do not believe a man is fitted for the position of salesman when all he can do is meekly and blindly to follow the architect's specifications. He ought to be able to make suggestions, to substitute, which would possibly save you money and give you a better looking house than you were expecting to build. In a yard man's house I was shown a set of stairs, changes in which had been suggested by the salesman who got the

order, and the lumberman was enthusiastic over the appearance of them as compared with the original design. Now, you see that salesman did that man a favor that will be something of a pull on future orders.

When we come down to bottom facts there are a great many architects whose practicability will never kill them. They have studied the strength of materials, have learned to draw, know how a plan will look on paper—and that comes near telling the story. You couldn't find wings on one of them; therefore they are going to make mistakes like all the rest of us. I have heard contractors swearing about their plans more than once. I would first want a good designing architect to make my plans and then a competent salesman to lay his head with mine, and together decide just what the inside finish should be. I believe this would give me a better looking house than otherwise I would have and save me worry. In my humble opinion any intelligent young man who would serve an apprenticeship in an inside finish establishment, or even in any old planing mill, preparatory to acting as salesman, would be doing something for his country.

I heard of a little kink not long ago that may be new to you. A yard man told me that he furnished the oak, cypress, yellow pine and other woods for all the mill work he had done. When he secures a job he selects his lumber, carries it to the local factory and pays for having it put into the shape he wants it. He knows then what kind of lumber goes into a job and he thinks that by furnishing the material he keeps an extra profit in the family. He is a very successful lumberman and he wouldn't be pursuing this method year after year unless there were something in it.

Next year when the building season shall open up in the red hot way we are all expecting I trust that the sash and door men will hustle some things a little faster than they have been doing this season, and that the yard men's patience may be somewhat lengthened. What we want is to come together mutually, all as happy as so many lambs.

MAPLE AND BIRCH FLOORING.

The veteran dealer, his assistant and your humble servant were up in the shed trying to sort out a pile of maple and birch flooring. You would no doubt say that such combined talent would be able to do that simple little job on the run, wouldn't you? The cold fact remains, however, that having concentrated our powerful intellects on certain pieces we were not more than dead sure that we were right. This yard man had received a shipment of the two kinds of flooring, they were mixed and the thing was to separate them. The yard man knew I was coming and I suppose he thought it would be an excellent chance to find out how little I know.

I have not yet seen that man who can name all the woods off hand simply by handling small samples of them. Perhaps such a man is somewhere and if so I would like to see what kind of bumps there are on his head. A lumberman once said to me that he could name any wood and was inclined to laugh at the idea that any fellow who was wrestling with woods all the time should feel incompetent to do this. But you know that talk is the cheapest thing on the face of the earth. This man had his talking spell and then when it came to action he met his Waterloo. I took him to the banquet hall in the Auditorium hotel, Chicago, and he fell down. There was wood used in profusion in a large room and this wood the lumberman could not name. Sycamore, the kind of wood in court, was newer as a finish than it is now, which undoubtedly had something to do with throwing the man off the track. At that time sycamore was regarded as a very plebeian wood, about fit for plug tobacco boxes, and he was not expecting to find it in one of the finest rooms in the United States. I wish that the retail men who stop at the Auditorium when in Chicago would ask to see the banquet hall of the house, so they may know what an art wood sycamore is when used at its best. It

would give them food for thought that as ammunition they might advantageously fire at a customer now and then.

The trio up in the shed acted on the principle that birch is the lighter wood of the two, and so we sorted the flooring more by the sense of feeling than by sight. The grain of a birch and that of a maple board would often be so identical that we would challenge any man to tell which was which. Of course in this little article the three of us are exposing our ignorance to the great, critical public, but it is for a purpose. There are yard men who if they should have occasion to order maple and birch flooring from one concern might save themselves trouble by asking to have it labeled before it is sent on its way.

Not many years ago it would have taken a search warrant to find birch flooring in any except the more prominent large town yards but it is now kept in stock by hundreds of dealers. The list of articles that must be kept by the up to date yard man is gradually increasing in numbers.

A yard man related an amusing incident in connection with the introduction of maple flooring in his town. "I had just received a lot and was talking it to a man of means who was about to build a good house," he said. "He looked it over critically while I was enumerating its qualities and then broke out, 'Maple! hades! Good old pine is good enough for me!' That same man was talking with me the other day about maple to replace his 'good old pine' kitchen floor."

UNEVENNESS OF TRADE.

A half dozen of us were in the writing room of the hotel and when there was a lull in wagging the pens some of the fellows went to talking about trade. A man who handles fancy goods for the holidays said he had been having a nice run of business. Then a clothing man thumped the table with his knuckles and said if it would become colder he would sell more goods.

"How do you find trade?" I was asked.

"Haven't sold a cent's worth in three months," I replied.

Just then I had placed my John Hancock to a letter to my best girl and immediately left the room. They no doubt wondered how a fellow could dress so well and sell no goods.

Trade has been nearly as spotted in the lumber line as it appeared to be with us fellows in the hotel. But let us not get in the habit of thinking that all the towns can keep hustling everlastingly. Even the sea is at times calm. If



"Haven't sold a cent's worth."

we did not go to bed and rest and sleep nights there would come a sudden end to us. Towns must also have a breathing spell. Those places which have been quiet this season will forge ahead the next. If we could see all the lumber made into buildings that the lumbermen of the country are anxious to sell in the next twelve months the area of the states in the union would be one solid city.

Yard men are restless creatures in times of a lull. They are unreasonably restless. A dealer recently said to me,

"There goes the last load of an \$800 bill." The selling and delivering of that bill cost the yard man little time comparatively. When he got right down to business it was probably sold inside of sixty minutes. Then it went out in great loads. A steady business like that would make millionaires of us all, and then we would cease to be happy or useful. When a man has nothing to do but to clip coupons he is of little more benefit to the world than a telegraph pole.

Now suppose we stand around the grocery and dry goods stores of our neighbors and watch them for a while. We see them selling a gallon of molasses for 40 cents, a can of oil for a dime, a paper of pins, calico for a dress, and just think how long it takes one of them to sell \$800 worth of goods. A volume of business that you would do in an hour they are a week in doing. Then what is the matter that you can't take it easy between spells? I actually believe that the lumber world is full of retail dealers who do not appreciate the advantage of having their trade thrown at them in big lumps. Last summer I hung around an office nearly an entire afternoon and the yard man was complaining there was nothing going on, yet he incidentally remarked that he sold \$200 worth of lumber that morning. No doubt his profits would foot up from \$30 to \$40 for that day, and there he was crying for more.

Owing to the very nature of our business our expectations leap all bounds of reason. We want the earth, and when we get a big slice of it we begin to cry for the moon. You have read, "For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" We will draw it milder, and ask, What shall it profit a man to hoard up riches at the expense of his health? Then comes nervous prostration, and he sees devils peering into his face even when he is surrounded by sunshine. The last days of that man are shorter than his first, and a thousand times less happy. This world—or rather the people of it—are running on many false theories.

If we do not enjoy this life and have a little fun as we

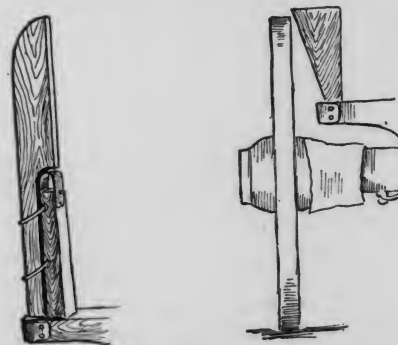
go along, when will we enjoy a life? Can't tell, can you? I have no confidence whatever in any man who prates about playing on a harp of a thousand strings hereafter when he does not begin playing it here. Therefore, beloved, let us not fret and sweat, and break ourselves down because we are unable to sell big bills from morning till night the year round. We know we have got 'em; we know that we will sell nearly all the lumber for the never-ending improvements of this giant country, and what more do we want?

WAGON STAKES.

The ordinary stake on the delivery wagon has not filled the bill for the reason that the wagon manufacturers have gone right on making the same old kind of stake, no matter whether the wagon was to be used for hauling lumber or other material. They have done this for the reason that, like the rest of the world, wagon makers are sheep. It is surprising how many sheep there are even among those people who would naturally be supposed to do a little thinking for themselves instead of following others.

No wagon maker, so far as I have learned, has ever evolved out of the old stake rut. As the great granther made wagon stakes so must his descendants forever and ever. In the lumber world the improvements which have been made in wagon stakes have been suggested by the lumbermen themselves. Though the old-time short stake, with the annex on the outside of it, is used by nine-tenths of the yard men of the country it is a failure from the fact that a load with such stakes cannot be carried up evenly. Having piled to the top of the permanent stake then the load must jut out to another width. To overcome this difficulty there are yard men who have had stakes mortised into the bolster in such a way they can be removed. When this is done the yard man has several sets of stakes, each set to conform to the size of the load it is intended to haul.

Herewith are illustrated two stakes, one of them, the "built up," being common in certain sections. All these things go by sections. In certain territory covering a large area it would be as easy to find a hen's tooth as it would a stake



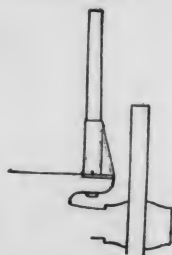
"Herewith are illustrated two stakes."

of this character. Having seen the illustration, it is easy to make the stakes. They should be of oak, of the same thickness as the permanent stakes, and when in place stand about two feet above them. The object is, of course, to form a straight surface against which to pile.

The other stake, as you will observe, spreads until when it is as high as the wheel it is only one inch from it. It is also made an inch higher than the wheel. At the top it is eight inches wide. The object of the shape of this stake is that lumber can be easily swung on it, its nearness to the wheel preventing a board from dropping between them.

In the "twentieth century stake," as the inventor calls it, the socket, which is nine inches long from the bolster up, is of solid iron, the shell being five-sixteenths of an inch thick. The width lengthwise of the bolster is five and three-quarters inches and crosswise four inches. The hole for the stake is one and a half by three and a quarter. The bottom of the socket is let into the bolster for a little way, a bolt

passing down through both to hold it in place. The stake is edged with hoop iron to prevent wearing. A small hole should be drilled through the shell at the bottom of the



"The twentieth century stake."

socket, else, when the wagon has stood out in a rain, when the stake is put in the water will squirt up in your face.

The socket was first made of cast iron, but it was not strong enough and malleable iron was used. The cost of the stakes was 65 cents each.

THE TWO KINDS.

The purely commercial tradesman or professional man does not rank in the first class. There are commercial surgeons who would cut off your leg in a York minute for the fee, while some other surgeon who was inspired by a higher motive than the money there might be in it would go to work and save the leg. You have doubtless known lawyers whose sole object seemed to be to bring cases to trial, while there are others who will advise the adjustment of differences outside of the court room. Except as an example to shun, a man is no great account in the world unless he carries his conscience into business. If he does not do this he becomes a quack, a swindler, legally or otherwise.

It is a pitiful day for us when we cease to feel an in-

terest in the welfare of others. When we work for self alone—work for self at the expense of treating others fairly and honorably—as sure as we live we are on a train that will run us into the ditch. I do not mean necessarily into the financial ditch, and I hope that not one of my readers gages his success wholly by the money he is making. Money is necessary—we all want it and need it—but a large amount of it is decidedly less essential than are some other things. In the eyes of the world we can't cut a swell on these other things as we can on money, but they will stay by us longer. When our hands are getting so cold and palsied that we couldn't pick up a thousand dollar bill if it was right by us on the bed these other things will stand by us. I once knew an honest, kind hearted man who, owing to ill health and bad luck, was forced to spend his closing days in an almshouse. But he didn't complain and dump around. "I will not be here long," he said; "pretty soon I will go on my way." A cheap coffin enclosed the old man's remains, and they were buried on a knoll out in the field with nothing but a painted board to mark the grave, but I believe the man proper went on his way to such riches as we all may covet.

We must all the time have an eye out for the good of our customers. That is the only way to feel assured that we can sleep with a decent fellow every night, and eat with him, and associate with him the livelong day. We can easily get away from a mean man provided that mean man is not ourself, but if it is ourself there is the stinking stuff right under our nose all the time.

In an office a man came in to buy coal. "Send me up two tons of the kind I had before," said he. Now you see that was an easy order to fill—no talking over selling it; simply haul the coal up and in due time get the money.

"I want to send you another kind of coal today, for I believe it is better," said the yard man.

"Haven't you the other?" was asked.

"Yes, I have the same thing, not much of it though, and

if you insist on it you shall have it, but I can give you a better coal than that."

Then he explained the difference. I know a little about coal myself, enough to know that this man was giving it to the customer as straight as a chalk line. This customer fairly blew in, he was so breezy and up and dressed. He seemed to be in a hurry to catch a train. But when the yard man began to talk about a better coal he had plenty of time to listen. We always do have plenty of time when our own



"Two tons of the kind I had before."

interests are at stake. Now I would not hesitate to bet you \$4 that that man will continue to buy his coal of that dealer. He is no blockhead, and I know well enough he went away from that office thinking that the yard man had tried to do him a favor. Wouldn't you? In all these matters let us reason from our own standpoint and we will get it nearly right. This is simply one little incident to show how easy it is to help our customers along at the same time we are

helping ourselves. If we would only bring ourselves to know it we would find it does not cost half so much to do a little good in the world as we go along as we might think it did.

REASONS FOR THANKS.

We will not meet again before Thanksgiving, so let us lay our heads together and decide on some things for which we should return thanks. Personally I do not think much of the official species of thankfulness, for without any hint from the president of the United States or anybody else our hearts should be floating in the atmosphere of thankfulness the whole time. But we forget and neglect. Ingratitude in all of us is bigger than a wolf. I should like to see one man refined in the crucible of thought, love and sorrow until he had reached his possibilities. What a magnificent creature he would be!

What if the president should appoint a day for us to love our wives and children? Wouldn't we say, "Why, what is the matter with you, old man; don't we love them all the time?" And then the formal way in which it is done! We all have our opinions and ideas, you know, but I can't believe that when a man, by request of the president of the United States, closes his eyes and says thanks, they go higher than the top of the chimney. Gratitude must come from the heart to be of value. If it doesn't hail from that organ it doesn't lack much of being bogus. My grandfather used to say that "lip service" was a delusion. We too often act on the principle that we can fool the Almighty, just as we fool the people with whom we associate. We like to hypnotize our neighbors and have them think that we were gotten up after a special pattern; that we are all wool and a yard wide, while every minute of the time we know there are cotton threads running through us in every direction.

Now there are those best girls of ours. They come a

million times nearer being angels than we are. How good we led them to think we would always be to them when we were courting them and giving them candy and taffy. You probably remember when they would sit on our knees—that is, if we considered that way of sitting “good form,” and the most of us did—we would strenuously object when they suggested they were heavy, and cling to them as to an anchor of hope. Then we hitched up and how faithful and good they have been all the years since. The hands of the most of them bear the marks of work. Gray hairs have come into their blond or raven locks. The girlish spright-



“They would sit on our knees.”

liness has gone, and their feet have become heavier. During this period of transformation they have been doing, doing, doing all the time for us. Do we tell them we appreciate it all? Do we take them in our arms and let them know that our love has not cooled? I am fearful all of us do not. If those dear forms were stretched on an undertaker's board in the darkened parlor tonight, there are those of us who would give our lumber yards if the deaf ears could only hear the words which we would pour into them—words mostly which we have neglected to speak. So one

thing to do is to be thankful to our wives. Early Thanksgiving morning give them a hug and kiss that will so astonish them that they will fall down. Keep this up, mix turkey and cranberry sauce with it, and if you do not say it has been a pink of a holiday you may kick me. At first our wives may think it necessary to have a commission of lunacy sit on us, but they will get over it after a little.



“In the atmosphere of thankfulness.”

Let us be thankful that we are a great, prosperous nation. Every man of us wants to get it out of his head that the success of one clique of politicians or another is going to down this country. We are the people; we do the work and pay the freight, and if these scheming politicians who suck the public teat pull it so it hurts us too much we are big enough to rise up and wipe the ground with them, and

we will do it, too. Every party knowingly harbors bosses, demagogues and barnacles, but they mustn't get to fooling with the people too much. My faith is in the people, not in the office seekers who go howling up and down the land peddling sophistry and belittling everybody who stands in their way to a life of little work, "glory" and big pay. Notwithstanding we may cuss the politician, let us be thankful for our magnificent, grand and glorious country. Let's drink to that country and pick a turkey bone to its continued prosperity.

Then we will be thankful for the business we are in. It is the best business going. It is a healthy business; a business that a man can follow and still look upon himself as a man. A business that if it should come to a halt the improvements of the whole country would halt. It is an honest business regardless of the character of any man who may be following it. It is not like selling gin or shoddy clothing. It is different from practicing law as some men practice it, or preaching as some men preach. It is highly respectable and thoroughly essential. We should be thankful we are engaged in such a business, and let us pick the gobbler's neck to its success.

And above all let us be thankful that we are alive—that we were born—that stretching away before us is a path leading to heights of which we cannot conceive; to God the giver of all; for children, love, friendship, health, plenty, peace of mind; for the birds, air, sunshine, aye and for clouds and storms. If on Thanksgiving morning we begin returning thanks and keep it up all day and then continue until our lamp of life is snuffed out they cannot be too many nor too hearty.

PICKING OVER STOCK.

There are people who always want the best without paying proportionately for it. We have seen men who could go into a store and without a blush on their cheeks pick out the biggest hen's eggs. This desire is natural enough—they want to get the most they can for their money—but at the same time the dealer has an interest to subserve. It is for the run of his goods on which the tradesman sets a price, and when a purchaser gets better than this he should expect to pay for the privilege.

We all know there is a pick to be had in lumber. Take any grade and there is a choice in the boards. Some of them are better than others. There are buyers who know this well enough and if permitted to do so they will act on that knowledge. Especially does it please the farmer to have piles of lumber picked over for him in order that he may have the best. A yard man once said to me, "I have farmer customers who expect this state of things, but I always make the selections, and when we are through I don't believe they have any more than a fair run of the lumber." He projected a smile that I understood as meaning that he could play *hocus pocus* with them.

I was recently in a yard of good size in which a good deal of this picking had been carried on, and picking in earnest, too. The farmers understood they would be given the best boards in the piles. Of course this pleased them, but when it became known there were others it did not please. As soon as the town people, particularly the contractors, got an inkling of it they rebelled. They said they were not going to take the skim milk and permit the farmers to have the cream, and some of them went elsewhere to buy their stuff. The trade of the yard was injured to just that extent. I cannot swear that the yard man is aware how this picking business is reacting on him, as there are phases of some men's business which are better understood by outsiders than by themselves. There is hardly a week passes

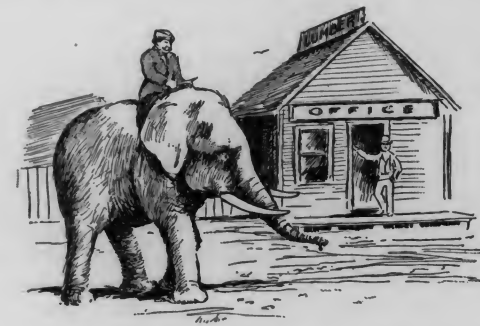
but I wish that some dealer could see himself as others see him. And I guess if we all could do that we would see plenty of holes in ourselves to be soldered up.

"I am perfectly willing that a customer should pick his lumber, but he must pay me for it," was the testimony of a yard man. "If he pick over a pile so that what is left should by rights go into a lower grade he must pay me the difference in price between those grades for what is left."

There would be mighty little picking if every dealer should follow this man's plan. As it is I hardly think there is much of it, but occasionally, you know, there is a fellow who appears to be built on abnormal lines, and we must look for him to do abnormal things. When we expect the same thing of all people we will come out in our calculations at the little end of the horn. Recently I saw a yard man climb up and down forty feet of ladder and pull over his piles of uppers in search of a board from which a prospective customer wanted a piece twenty-eight inches long. He looked and looked and looked, but didn't find it. The average carpenter could have found sufficient lumber with which to finish a 10-room house, but there was not a piece there good enough for the fellow who was looking. This man was finiky and really did not know what he did want. That which pleased me, however, was to see the yard man descend to earth as calm as a May morning. From his appearance you would think the man did him a favor by coming to his yard and asking him to rummage through pile after pile of lumber with a prospect of selling a piece of board twenty-eight inches in length. That was the way to bring him there the second time, however, and possibly the second time he would want enough lumber to build a barn. How things will turn out none of us know until they do turn out.

LOCATING ON TRACK.

In a busy little burg that has great promise of growth a yard man had stuck his yard off in the edge of the town on a railway track under the impression that lumber could be more advantageously handled in such a location. He had spent some money in building sheds and an office, and, to be frank, I felt sorry for him, for I knew he was a little behind the up-to-date practice, else he would not have done it. I would rather see a man feel good than bad any time, so I didn't suggest to him that in all probability he had made a mistake in locating, which in after years he would regret.



"The free gift of an elephant."

It appears very liberal on the part of a railway company to offer yard room, minus rent, but we should be a little careful how we accept the free gift of an elephant, for after a little he is liable to eat his own head off, and ours too.

There is another point in connection with a railroad location which perhaps is not considered by every yard man. I have known the complications growing out of such a location to be a thorn in the flesh. What do you suppose a railroad corporation is going to give a lumberman yard facilities for? For fun? Not exactly. It thinks it will place that lumberman under obligations to it, and expects to get

his business as against any competing road that may reach the same point. There are yard men who would pick up their traps in a York minute and make themselves scarce on railroad land if they saw their way clear to do so. When a railroad pats your back it implies that it expects you will show favors in return. That is human nature and the way it is looked at the world over. If there are two or more roads running into a town you do not want one of them to have a mortgage on you. It may be necessary to put a mortgage on your property, but for pity sake keep yourself clear of railroad encumbrance.

If this yard man I am speaking of, instead of going out on the railroad track, had camped as near the center of the town as he could, put up nice looking sheds and office, and if he did not feel disposed to build a closed shed fenced his yard in a tasty way, and kept his piles trim and neat, he simply would have commanded the attention of every farmer who came to the town to buy his supplies. That farmer, having hitched his team, could step as easily into the lumber office as he could into a grocery store. As it is, the farmer must tramp off down the railroad track, for very likely if he has lively horses he would prefer not to drive them down where the engines are switching and whistling. Within a month I saw a wagon being loaded in an unfenced yard on the prairie by a railroad track, and a freight train coming along, the horses began to prick up their ears, the farmer caught them by the bits, and they fairly churned him up and down in an effort to break away. There the team danced, all loading suspended until the train had got out of sight and hearing. Have you an idea that such an experience would be a magnet that would draw the farmer with his colts to that yard again?

Another consideration: What do you think might have been a future result if this yard man had located in the center of town? His real estate would have increased in value right along, and some fine morning he would be able to sell out at a profit that would make him laugh. When a yard

is located a distance from a railroad track I don't believe there are many who pay more than 15 cents a thousand to have their lumber moved from the car to the piles, and this, too, when the yard man hires his hauling. When it is done with his own team it matters little whether the distance is ten rods or a mile.

THE VIRTUE OF RELAXATION.

I was sorry I could not see the yard man, but when told his mission away from home I said, "By jinks, that's good. I wish every lumberman in the United States could break away from business for an even two months." This man is at the lake, as a member of some outing club, and will stay there off and on, principally off, for another month. His business was running along as usual instead of going to smash as so many yard men think their business will if they leave it for a while.

The man who sells lumber at retail has, as a rule, a good deal of time on his hands. By a large majority business in a yard does not keep right on without a break from morning till night. It is not like selling tea, sugar, needles and thread. "I was in the general mercantile business at one time," said a yard man, "and when I made the change I thought I was loafing. I used to keep my store open every night until 10 o'clock, and often I would find it necessary to open up Sunday. I would go to bed as tired as a dog. I don't know a business that is better adapted to a man who is getting old and a little lazy than the lumber business."

"I sold a good barn bill this morning," said another dealer, and though I was in his office for three hours not a customer showed his face.

"Why I like this line of trade better than any other is that at 5 o'clock I can close my yard, and put in my evenings as I see fit," was the way another put it.

The advocates of everlasting staying at home might say that the retail lumberman who has so much time to hold down chairs does not need a vacation. Right there is where

they are off their feet. The cold fact is that not one in a thousand of us is being killed by overwork. Something besides the effect of work is preying upon our vitality. I don't know any yard men who are working themselves to death. Worry is telling on some of them, but that is another thing. When a man opens up his place of business at seven, and often at eight, in the morning, has anywhere from two to eight hours' leisure during the day, and shuts his office door at five or six in the evening, if he is dying it is something besides hard work that is taking him off.

But we want a change from that old humdrum life—that is what we want. We want to break the monotony, and come back feeling that life is more endurable. We want to mix with people so as to know how thankful we should feel that we are so much better off than thousands of others.

The other evening a half dozen of us sat on the hotel porch, and an agricultural implement salesman gave a little talk on love and marriage. "Some people take pleasure in rading the traveling man," he said. "They would make him out as tough as that steak we had for supper. But I'll just bet any man a sulky plow that the percentage of divorces among the traveling men is smaller than that of any other class, due to the fact that absence keeps the spark of love alive. When we go home we are glad to see our wives and they are glad to see us. I don't believe any woman could be with me all the time and put up with my danged mean ways!" We laughed at such oddity; still every man there no doubt felt that the implement salesman was touching somewhere near bottom, and personally my mind dallied with those joyous moments when, arriving home from my trips, I meet my best girl at the door and salute her with smacks which sound like cannon crackers.

There are several things to take into account when considering the vacation problem. The expense stands in the way with many, they say. They think so, straight enough, but six months from now, from a financial standpoint do

you think they would know the difference? Not once in a thousand times.

Here is one of the greatest arguments, however: We are in possession of this wondrous body, on the condition of which largely depends our success and happiness, and when that body is gone we don't know as we will have another right away. None of us takes any too good care of it. I have an old fiddle in the house that is kept tenderly wrapped in flannel that all moisture may be excluded, yet today in a hard rainstorm I was out in my shirtsleeves trying to save a chicken from drowning that would not sell for 5 cents. I am even better to my old black cow than I am to myself. And she is better to herself than I am to myself, for when she has eaten enough she quits; when she has drank enough she quits, and when tired she seeks the shade of the tree and rests. In many respects the brutes shame us.

PRICE LISTS.

The great majority of things are differently considered by different people. Even the dollar which bears on the face of it the value of 100 cents is thought more highly of by some than by others. Take my case, for instance: Here at midnight I am clicking this communication off on the old writing machine. What for? For the dollars that it will bring me. Which does not prove that I love the dollar so well that in order to make it I never sleep, but that I have loved it less than has, say, my neighbor across the way, who for two hours has been peacefully snoring on his curled hair mattress. He can afford to snore. He can spare the time to do it. He has made his dollars and has clung to them with the grip of a dentist's forceps. He is not obliged to sit up nights and make more of them in order that he may eat.

Just for the fun of the thing the other night when all was still and calm I roughly estimated how much money

I had earned since striking out in the world, and the amount fairly staggered me. I said to my best girl: "Look at that! See where we might have been if we had only skinned through!" She didn't say a word, but she looked over where the boys were asleep on the sofa, side by side, each face to her a perfect poem, and there was not a gleam in her eye for a dollar.

Not long ago I received an invoice of books and a neighbor happened in when they were opened. He did not seem to know Balzac from Nebuchadnezzar, therefore Balzac did not interest him a whit; and when he was handed a work on the latest research in astronomy he said it was "a pretty book." So it goes. A dollar is of value to one man for the dollar's sake, while to another it is of value for what it will buy. Still I have my old black cow clear and above board, several fiddles, more books to revel among than a giant could lift, and recollections of life and friends that I wouldn't swap for all the coal oil that old man Rockefeller ever owned or ever will own. I tell you what I rejoice over about as much as anything, and that is that I was born.

The price list shares in this irregularity of estimation. It passes muster with a few and the others take it for what it is worth. It is a necessity—I don't believe we can deny that. If nothing more it serves as an advertising medium. The wholesale dealer who sends out a price list at the same time reminds the yard man to whom it is mailed that he (the wholesale dealer) is still on deck. There are retail dealers by the hundreds who claim that price lists are of no value insomuch that in the majority of cases the figures do not correspond with the actual prices at which lumber is sold. It seems to me, however, that their position is hardly well taken. They would miss the lists. Should no more come to them they would feel lonesome. Admitting that quoted prices are not the ruling ones, they are something of a guide nevertheless. Were it not for them we would not know so well how much to beat the traveling salesman down with our stuffed clubs. Did we receive no lists we

would be obliged to visit the markets to see how the pulse of the wholesale men was beating. That is what a price list is—the pulse of the wholesale market. Or we may call it the mainspring of a watch; but there is generally a regulator attached to it, and that regulator is the traveling salesman.

Last fall I was in an office when a price list was taken from an envelope. At that time the lumber barons couldn't boost lumber fast enough. It would have suited them if



"Sent it among the stars."

they could have exploded dynamite under it and sent it up among the stars somewhere. This yard man looked the list over, remarked it was pretty high, "but before I buy, which I must soon, I will wait until So-and-so comes along and see what he says about it," he concluded. So-and-so is a salesman and really that little, and you might call it a trifling, incident impressed me as much as any one thing ever did with the benefit a salesman may be to his customers and the extent to which some retail men rely on the boys who sell them their lumber.

There are plenty of yard men who would like the list to represent to a nicety the price at which lumber is selling. They don't like to see a list posing as a price standard and at the same time have a reputation that will rival Gulliver's. Then there are dealers who want quite the reverse of all this. One of them recently said: "I hope the wholesale men will keep up the list. Carpenters and contractors get these lists and it is not good policy to put low lists in their hands or, in fact, any lists which represent the actual selling price of lumber. If the yard men buy from \$1 to \$2 off the list, all right. I would have the list high for effect. Then if the carpenters and contractors get hold of it they don't know to a dead certainty what our stuff costs us, as they would were the list accurate. Now suppose you want to buy a watch and go over to your jeweler's. He prices you a watch and you hang out over the figures he charges you. At length he throws out a price list of a wholesale jeweler, points out on it the watch you are fancying and tells you that is the cost of the thing at wholesale, and that he has added only enough to it to make the transaction a fair one. The fact is the fellow has had a big discount on that list and consequently does not hesitate to show the list to you. I wish the wholesale lumber price list business could be run in some such way as that. Of course there are poachers and others who would be giving it away but they couldn't give it away to everybody. I would like to have it fixed so I could get a list right out to any carpenter or farmer and say to him that I would sell him lumber at an advance, say of 10 percent on the prices quoted. Then if the list was out of whack to the extent of about \$2 all around it would even things up and keep the matter more closely in our own hands."

That is one man's opinion and a pretty good man, speaking in a lumber sense, he is. There may not be many of you who think along in the same channel, and if there are not it is not going to ruffle his feathers much. He was telling what he would like; still, he said he never expected to

see it that way. There are fewer men selling watches than lumber and the elevated lumber list might not stay in hiding long. The poacher would have another string to pull. He would make it known how the great lumber "combine" was trying to fool the people and that he was the Moses that would lead them to victory. I can see, however, when at times such a list as described above would have its advantages and at other times its disadvantages.

HOW TO PILE DRAIN PIPE.

If the storage of this pipe has not caused you worry you are a rare exception. The apparently insignificant things of life, those things which at first thought we might imagine ought not to be considered the second time, not infrequently give us much trouble. The other morning while handling a piece of stove wood (for I have to make fires, blame it!) a sliver, possibly as large as a fine needle point, was thrust into the ball of my thumb. Trifling thing, you will say, and I know it; but what did I do? You are expecting to hear that, unconcerned, I went right on with my morning chores, never minding that minute sliver. From what you know of me and from the way I have talked about whipping the Boers and the English army you wouldn't think that I would open my mouth about the little sliver. I will tell you what I did. I dropped my chores as though they were red hot, rushed into the back parlor with my every day clothes on, and called to my best girl to hurry up and pick a sliver from my thumb that was hurting like tarnation! She was enjoying a sweet nap, but years ago she pledged herself to obey me, so out she came, needle in hand, and having raised the sliver, held it on the point of the needle toward the light, remarking, "Fiddlesticks, I can hardly see it!" Then I sneaked out to feed the old black cow.

This simply illustrates our make-up, and in fact the

make-up of all things material. The concrete is composed of the minute—minute, but all important. If today we should fall and break an arm the news would go all over town, yet gnawing away on us are bacilli, so small they would probably get away from the best microscope any of us owns, and which in time will do us up in such a way that as compared with it we would call a broken arm a picnic.

Not long ago in conversation with a yard man we canvassed several knotty questions. He told me how grades had deteriorated at wholesale points, how collections were bothering him, how anxious he was to get hold of a good man to work in the yard, but it was not until we had walked around the yard and halted in one corner of it where pipe was piled that real trouble seemed to be rubbed into his very soul. He said he was disgusted with the pipe trade. When a customer came for it that customer would see particular pieces which he wanted in the pile, and when an effort was made to get them, down would roll the stuff, not infrequently breaking and raising the dickens generally.

I stepped into a yard the other day, and there the pipe problem was solved. How? Why, bless you, by simply standing the pipe on end! A small area had been leveled off, boards laid to make a smooth surface, and on these boards was standing the pipe. "Where did you get that idea?" I asked the yard man.

"I thought it out," said he. "That pipe used to give me more trouble than all the mothers-in-law I ever had, so I devised this way and now it is as easy as sleeping." I was half a mind to ask the man to kindly take a lath and pound my head as a reward for my skull being so thick all these years. Never fall down? Never. Never blow down? Never.

It is not safe, this yard man says, to pile eight-inch pipe more than two lengths high, but when it comes to a foot and up in diameter it can be piled three lengths. They can be piled in rows, leaving walking space between them,

then the purchaser can go among them and pick and have the pieces selected set out. There is no falling down, no tumbling around, consequently no breakage and, what is as good, no harrowing of the feelings. It is better for us to harrow our corn patch than our feelings. I hope that plenty of you are already piling your pipe in this way, but of all the yards I have visited this was the first time I had seen it done.

A SWELL PRONUNCIATION.

We were talking about the airs some people put on, and the yard man related an incident.

"A young lady who had just come home from the seminary in Nora Springs drove up to my place one morning and asked me if I had any cem-ent. I didn't know what in fury she was trying to get through her, so I hesitated and told her I thought I had none. 'You must have,' said she. 'Cem-ent! Mother wants it to stop the leak in the cistern.'

"'Oh,' I said, 'ce-ment! Why, of course, how stupid I was!' Then I gave her a half bushel of Portland cement.

"That night when the principal of the school came along I asked him what cem-ent was, and he said it was the same as ce-ment; that either pronunciation was correct. I had to take his word for it, but I never heard that swell pronunciation given to it before. It is wonderful how blamed cute and wise young ladies do get at boarding schools!"

SELLING OUT-OF-DATE STOCK.

When the yard man remarked there were people who don't know what style is, and who will buy an article as quickly if it is out of fashion as they will if it is in, I glanced down at my shoes, and drew them back under the chair. I associate more or less with the bon ton lumbermen of the country and undoubtedly ought to dress in the hight of

fashion, but somehow it isn't in me. I don't know how. I am so unsophisticated in those matters which pertain to the polished world that the clothing, hat, boot and shoe man can sell me almost anything. That is why I wear diamonds, for I know diamonds are always in fashion. Some weazen-faced duke over in Paris, with waxed mustache, can't dictate how a diamond shall glitter, thank the Lord.

After this yard man had his remarks under headway I saw he was not driving at me. "Now take that package of corner blocks there for door casings, so far as fashion is concerned they are deaders," he said. "You wouldn't think a man in the whole country would buy them. Nobody uses



"That is why I wear diamonds."

corner blocks in casings nowadays, you might say; but lots of people do. I am furnishing a house now that will cost \$2,400, and those very blocks are playing a part in it. The house is being built by a retired farmer, and he hasn't set up nights studying the styles in building.

"There are those porch posts. I wouldn't put that pattern in a house for myself; still, I sold six of them today. Then take windows; this year the style is one size and next year it will be another, but that little matter needn't worry the retail dealer. The average builder knows nothing about the style in windows. Two inches on the length of a win-

dow cuts no figure with him. When it comes to a large window I have noticed that nine in ten people think that the bigger it is the better it is. Get in a big window with a little red or yellow glass in the transom and they think they are fixed.

"To lay in with a good carpenter is a good way to keep out-of-date stuff moving. My faith in the carpenter as a help to the retail dealer grows all the time. I have made money by laying in with them. A carpenter, if he has a mind in that direction, can do the lumberman a good favor at every turn, and if he is not disposed to do that he can do him dirt. I started in as a carpenter myself, and know how it is. When I first opened in the yard business I also dickered a little in contracting. One of the carpenters got down on me, and by the jumping Moses if he didn't dirk me! He would tell that my lumber was poorer than my neighbor's, and I know he knocked me out of bills. I don't care what story the worst villain in a community may start there is somebody who will believe it."

Trying to draw him back to the original proposition of out-of-fashion stock, I asked him what hung longest around his premises. "Well," said he, "I have some book accounts that have been hanging around here eleven years!"

DUPLICATE RECEIPTS.

This is a big world and not one of us can ever expect to see all there is in it. You may say I ought to have run up against these duplicate receipt books a hundred times before now, but all the same I haven't. I had sat around the office for an hour and a half and had begun to think it was my fate to leave the town as dry as a farrow cow, but just when I was about to get a move on me the yard man took an odd looking book from a drawer and gave a customer a receipt. "What is that?" I asked.

"A receipt book," replied the yard man as unconcerned as though nothing was happening. Then after the cus-

tomer was gone we sat down to the table and discussed this new fangled receipt book. The pages are twice as long as the receipt blank proper is wide. There are two blanks, one at the top of the page and the other at the opposite side at the bottom of the page. When a man using one of these books is so fortunate as to receive money the carbon paper is placed over the top blank, the sheet folded up over it, which causes the lower blank to register with the one covered by the carbon, the receipt is written, torn off along a perforated line and given to the customer, and beneath the carbon paper is the duplicate. It is nothing that is complicated and is quite in line with the other carbon duplicate work, but to me it was new.

"I never permit a man who has paid me money to go out of my office without a receipt," said the yard man, "and I want to be able a year from that time to tell that he had it, too. And there is the proof," he continued, tapping the book. "When a long account is run, a man buying lumber, coal, wood, lime, and so on, the customer's ideas concerning the payments he has made are liable at times to be very vague. He may pay for some lumber today, as an afterthought order a ton or two of coal, and when the bill is sent him for the coal he remembers paying for the lumber; he knows he ordered the coal at the same time and wonders why in the dickens he didn't square the whole thing up. He may pay it without any words, but let me tell you I have before now paid accounts which have been presented to me, with no back talk on my part, and then quit the place. There are men who don't spit it out when they are dissatisfied. Take a contractor, for instance; sometimes he is ordering right along and paying periodically, as you may say, and it is not a bit strange that he should get things mixed. I believe I lost \$80 once by one of the best contractors who ever dealt with me. He said he had paid it, and I was convinced he had not. If he did pay it I gave him a receipt and if he had the receipt he would have produced it, for he was an honest man. But there is no use talking, receipts are

as easily lost as umbrellas. A man was in here the other day, cleaned out one of his pockets and among the worn out papers were two receipts, and he threw the whole lot of stuff into the stove. Now when I give a man a receipt he may do with it what he has a mind to, I have got a record of it.

"This kind of receipt serves another good purpose. Having taken money and receipted for it I need make no further record of that cash until my books are written up at night. My receipts represent cash received. It is easy for a business man to 'slip a cog,' as you sometimes put it. I know men who never pretend to give receipts unless they are asked for them. How easy it is for such a man to receive money, especially in small amounts, put it in the drawer and then be called away before he makes any further minute of it. That night his cash overruns, he can't remember where the surplus comes from and somebody's account goes wrong.

"What is the trouble with ordinary receipt books with stubs? I will tell you. You are supposed to record on that stub the amount you have written in the receipt, but do you always? is the question. I can answer that you do not; or rather that I have not. When I used the old fashioned book I remember giving a man a receipt for \$500, and that night when I looked at the stub it was \$5.50 as plain as day. No doubt my attention was attracted and I went wrong. I did not write the amount on the stub, simply put it down in figures. What if that afternoon I had died and the man had stood out about his account? There was my hand for it that he had paid me only \$5.50. I had rather write two receipts at the same operation, and then I know they will correspond. And talking about men standing out on their accounts because the man they owed is dead, I know there are those who will do it. I have never had it tried on myself, but I have known of the game being played. As I look at it a man's business should be so conducted as to do

away with these possibilities to as great an extent as possible."

That to me was an interesting talk on receipts, and having heard it out I went up the street thinking what uneven creatures we are. This yard man had it down fine on receipts, but he had cause to complain of certain credits he had given. That is the way we go.

CRAMPED QUARTERS.

The day was so hot that I did not feel like tearing around town with my usual vim, so I took off my coat and vest and sat down in a big armchair to take it cool; and at the same time anybody who passed the office door could see my fine striped shirt that the day before I started from home I had paid 90 cents for. The yard man was also in undress uniform. It is only at such times that a man is himself. He is not posing for the eye of anybody. His mind is at peace. The tension is off, and he really feels happier than any queen does when she sits on her gilded throne with her crown of gold and gems, weighing forty pounds, bearing down like lead on the top of her head. I got up this morning with the strongest kind of an inclination to write poetry, and it appears to be staying by me.

For two hours we sat there enjoying what may be called with no great stretch of imagination unalloyed existence. We talked lumber off and on, but it was too hot to pursue a subject with sufficient vigor to everlastingly settle it. Twice during the two hours we went down to the drug store and took lemonades through straws. Then, as a refreshing breeze came in at the door, the yard man adjusted his cigar, gave both suspenders a snap and led off on the subject of ample yard room.

"Land is not dear out here," he began. "If it cost as much as it does in the eastern cities it would be another tune. I know of no particular reason why all of us should not have

enough room to turn around on. Building a lumber plant is like building a house. To start with, in the latter case we have a place for all our furniture, and think we are fixed for life so far as room is concerned, but by and by our families increase, we are obliged to buy more beds and chairs, and the first we know we are crowded, and then we want to sell out and build larger. It is similar in a lumber yard. I thought I had room enough here, but there are piles of lumber in my shed alley which have no more business there than they have in my parlor. There seems to be no other place for it, though, and we will continue to stumble over it. We should so plan and build a yard or shed that it will take care of our maximum stock."

I told him I thought that was about right, and then he wiped his brow and said it was so darned hot he believed another lemonade would touch the spot.

PRESERVING THE FRESH LOOK.

In the past week I have seen stocks of moldings which were as black as your hat. In many a yard molding is the most abused stock. A dealer will shove his molding, which should be kept dry and away from dust, into a rack in an open shed, when he would not think that he could leave a No. 3 door outside his wareroom over night.

The loss from this way of handling moldings must constantly be met, but the big chunk of retribution will come later on—when, for instance, you are about to sell your yard. Then the prospective buyer will talk those moldings clear down to the foot of the hill. He will say they are so soiled they are not worth store room, and if you do not throw them in at a quarter of their value you will do what thousands of retail men have not done. And if you were buying a yard I know you would feel that if you bought dusty, weather-beaten moldings at a low price you would not be getting much of a bargain. When we are considering these matters

which pertain to ourselves we must try to look at them from the position of the man up the tree, for that is where the man will be, especially when he comes around to buy our soiled moldings.

What if the wholesale dealer should send you moldings besmeared with dirt as those out in your shed may possibly be this very minute? What kind of a hairpin would you accuse him of being? There should be practiced an art preservative in the mercantile business—that of keeping the goods as near as possible in the condition they were when they came from the wholesale houses. In dry goods, clothing, hats, boots and shoes, when this is not done the man who is handling them is not called a good merchant.

It so happened that in one day I was in two warehouses, the methods in which were radically different. In one of them there was an effort to make as much of a show as possible. Evidently as soon as an invoice of doors had arrived the paper had been taken from the doors, and they were set up around the room. In the other place there was only one of a kind stripped. "I want to keep these doors looking as fresh as possible," the yard man said. "If I unwrap all of them they are going to look grimy after a little. People like to buy fresh looking goods. The same buyer does not come into this room often, and whoever comes may carry away the impression that I have just received a new stock of goods, for all I care. That impression would most certainly be beneficial to me. No, I don't permit the dust to accumulate on those that are still wrapped."

This man is carrying out a principle that is as sound as a dollar. He is anxious that his doors shall have a fresh appearance, and thus create the impression in the minds of those who see them that they were recently purchased; and thinking they were new, the buyer would as naturally as he breathed infer that the styles were the latest. We are all the time reasoning from this to that, and every time the conclusion is either for or against something or somebody.

At another place the yard man threw open some tightly

fitting doors, and there were his molding strips in an inclosure that would defy dust. "One of the best paying improvements I have on the place," was the comment.

A yard man recently told me that one advantage of a closed shed is that it is thought by some that the lumber that comes from it is in better condition than though it had been piled open to the weather. What is more easy for a novice in lumber affairs to believe than this? And not infrequently there would be some truth mixed with the poetry.

"I have sold lumber to some people because they thought they were getting 'fresh' stock, as they termed it. Every board was bright and clean, and it pleased them," he said.

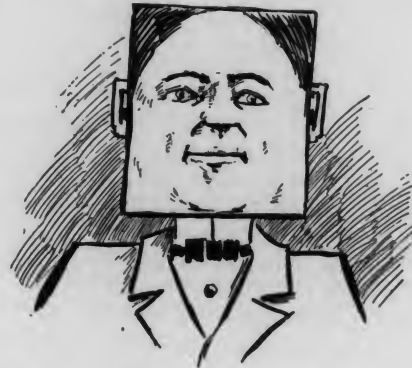
Some one before any of us was born said something about putting his best foot forward, and there was so much sense in the saying that it will no doubt be going the rounds after our lumber career shall have ended. It is a very good saying to bear in mind, and to follow it is inexpensive in dollars and cents often. We frequently get it into our heads, however, that it is the costly that most benefits, while in fact the reverse is true. The absolute necessities of life cost little.

THE SQUARE MAN.

I have observed that when a man has been running a yard for years in a town and has prospered, more than ninety-nine times in a hundred he is a man of excellent character. I was in a town in which there are two yards. One of them is run by a dealer who has sold lumber on that ground for many a year. He has got rich—rich enough to satisfy anybody who isn't crazy. And right along he has been doing the lion's share of the trade of the town. We chatted for a long time and it struck me there was good deal of man about him. You know that the fly up the creek fellow is branded in some way. If I believed in a devil I should be inclined to think he might have stamped these fellows so he could pick them out easily when he

wants them. Then I went over to the other yard and the dealer there said a word or two about his competitor. "He is hard competition," said he, "but he is as square as a die."

I thought I knew it, for on general principles he would not have been selling lumber all these years and holding the trade of the town unless he had been square. And, boys, for a long pull these square men are the hardest competitors that walk the earth. Why, it is child's play to compete with the trickster to what it is to hold our own when selling lumber alongside of a man who is "square as a die," unless we are also square.



"As square as a die."

I have seen your tricksters and schemers open their yards, deceive people right and left, but they didn't last. They made a good deal of rumpus while they were at it but it was not long until they folded their tents and stole away. These men don't wear and consequently they don't stick. The public is a lynx eyed animal after all. It looks through and through us, and when we don't know it, too. A young dealer was telling me how he was selling No. 2 dimension for No. 1 and in other ways pulling the wool over the eyes of his customers. I really felt like getting

him out behind the shed and preaching a little sermon to him. He is standing in quicksand and has already sunk up to his ankles. He will try to fool his customers more and more right along and by and by they will know him as well as he knows himself. That is the way it goes. A man who means to be good grows better and the deliberately bad man grows worse. Goodness begets goodness and deceptions begets deception. Nothing is truer than that we reap what we sow.

FALLACY OF SAYING "NO."

"Have you so-and-so?" I heard asked of a yard man, and the reply was, "No, I haven't."

I was sitting by the stove with one leg carelessly thrown over the arm of the chair, in my usual quiet, informal manner, and while I made no outward sign I did feel as though I would like to clear the deck for action and reel off a little speech to the lumberman, for as I look at it those are among the last words which as a seller of boards he should permit to escape from his lips.

Very likely the man who asked for that particular item of lumber didn't know his business. He knew there was such a grade as he called for, but he was a wise man indeed if he knew that nothing else would take its place, for that is something which even some of the best carpenters and contractors have not yet learned.

When the question was asked the yard man I certainly expected to hear him call back, "Hello, Jim! Come in. What are you making now?" If he had taken such a course he would have found out in three minutes what the lumber was needed for, and no doubt would have sold it.

Oh, these bothersome grades! If I were running a yard, so far as the average customer is concerned I would fire them higher than the kite in the fable soared. I would sell boards for every purpose, but not grades for any purpose.

A yard man told me that when selling a bill at least 60 percent of his customers appealed to him as to the way in some particular it should be filled.

A Missouri man writes that when he first read that I considered it poor business policy to talk about grades to the average customer he didn't know what kind of a fellow to take me for. He had been educated to sell grades as he had bought them, and of course thought it was the proper thing to do. "I got to thinking it over," he writes, "and then I adopted it, and now I would not think of going back to the old system. I now lose no sales because I do not have some particular 'grade.' The wonder is to me that I didn't see it before."

I like to sit down in a comfortable corner and have a yard man who, with his eyes open, has experienced the ups and downs of trade stuff me with wisdom. He needn't go slow either, for I wouldn't object if I should swell up as big as a balloon. I was having a little tete-a-tete, as the Dutchman would say, with a bright fellow who had sold lumber in more than one state, and he touched on this subject we are talking about. "Many yard men have not the tact to sell lumber," he remarked. "If a customer comes to an item not in stock, and the yard man says, 'No,' it throws a wet blanket over the deal. The best way is to lead the customer up to a substitute by saying that somebody else has used such and such an item in a bill, and often then he is bound to have it."

This remark dovetails with a bit of experience related by a yard man. "I ran low on cedars," said he, "the only bunch I had left being the sample you see there on the platform. A farmer came in who was in a rush for a barn, and when it came to the roof he talked cedars. We walked out there where the bunches of cedars and pines were lying side by side, and I dropped in a good word for the pine. I told him that to be honest the cedars had not in this country been used as long as pine, and that nobody could tell which would be the more durable, which is a fact; that his neigh-

bor, old Joe Brown, who was regarded as a man of good judgment, has used pine on his house, and in less than five minutes I sold him the pine."

Now I hope you see the hole in the skimmer. What if this man had said, "No, I haven't the cedars, but I have a good pine shingle that will answer the purpose?" The farmer would not have swallowed it. He had his head set on cedars, and he would have thought the lumber dealer was trying to palm off pine on him because he didn't have the other kind. The wet blanket would have been thrown right over the farmer's shoulders, and the chances are he would have gone where he could get cedars, and bought the balance of his bill there as well.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS IT ALL.

An egotistical yard man once said to me that he had no occasion to read the lumber papers, as he knew all about running a retail lumber yard. I did not tell him he lied, for he was on his own fighting ground and was a half head taller and weighed fifty pounds more than I did, but I kept up a hard thinking in that direction. You know about once in ten years we meet a man with the brains of a jackass, who delights in making people with whom he comes in contact feel small.

When I was younger than I am now I used to think there were yard men who had mastered their business. Surely, I thought, any occupation so simple as retailing lumber must be known all about by hundreds of men. I have gotten over that idea, however. Probably no man visits more retail yards than I do, and nearly every week I see some little kink, some novel method, that is of advantage to the man who employs it and which no doubt would be of advantage to others. Generally these peculiarities are originated by the men who use them. Should I be on the lumber turf a hundred years I should expect to find

these new and peculiar methods right along. Therefore, if even one of the good old saints were on earth and should tell me he knew all about running a lumber yard, I should know he was talking through his hat.

It has been my observation that some yard men who do not pretend to know it all stand flush with any of us. Late last winter one afternoon I was in a modest fellow's yard, expecting to go from there into Minnesota that evening.



"I did not tell him he lied."

I had looked the yard over and found it a slick plant. Everything was in apple-pie order, and several suggestions which had been made in my scribbings had been carried out. Then he talked with so much sense about collections, credits, etcetera, that I thought "Here is a retail man for your life."

When it was about train time this yard man insisted that I must stay over night. I did not know but he wanted me to go to the opera, charity ball, high kickers, or some

other entertainment that would refresh my weary brain, so I consented. After supper we went into his office, locked the door, piled on the fuel, and then this lumberman attached the suction pump to me. He doubtless asked a thousand questions. He wanted to know what others were doing, what I had learned about the shed question, cash business, bookkeeping, delivering and a hundred other allied subjects. The hands of the clock marked eight, nine, ten, and had nearly approached eleven before the little confer-



"Have moss on his back."

ence ended. And then this modest yard man wanted to pay me for the extra time I had put in!

"Bless your soul," said I, "what an: I for?" He probably didn't think that all the time he was absorbing from me I was taking from him. For the ideas I had gathered that evening I would have willingly sat up all night.

This case is cited to illustrate the fact that the best men in the retail business are those who are conscious they do not know it all, and are anxious to know more. They read

the matter pertaining to the yard business in the lumber papers, and take unto themselves that which they think may be of benefit. And let me say to you, beloved, that the man in any business who pursues any other course will finally have moss on his back.

I run up against some mighty sensible young men in the lumber business. And my love for the right kind of young men has no bounds. Ye gods! but what a vista opens up before them. Concerning we older fellows, who are losing our teeth and wearing corsets to take the curves out of our backs, it doesn't matter so much. The most we can do is to peg along, regretting that in the past we have not done more that was worthy of our high estate. As I look back I see the richest of flowers along the path I have trod—flowers of kindness, love, charity, success, that I could have put forth my hand and plucked, but there they stand mocking me, and though I water them with tears, I know they will bloom no more for me forever. I wish I could go out in the grove here today and preach a sermon to every young man who reads this. I would tell him that he may not only become a successful lumberman, but that in addition he may grow to be an intellectual, moral and physical god.

One of these sensible young men was seen not long ago. He has charge of a line yard in a small town, subscribes for two papers and is alive to the opportunities which will surely come his way. "I expect some day to have a yard of my own, and in order to meet the competition that I know I shall have to meet I want to know my business," he said.

Years hence we may look for that young man clear up stream where it has its source among the springs.

BLIND YARDS.

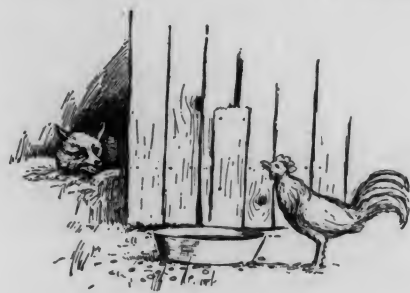
A blind yard often serves a good purpose. When a yard man is anxious to monopolize all the trade of a town that is possible one way is to put in a blind yard. At first blush the novice might ask, "Why blind? Why not assume that it has eyes like other yards?" Perhaps this is a fair answer to that question: The buying community wants competition. It seems to be as natural for us to dislike trusts as it is to hope or love, and if a man is known to be running two yards in one town, thus preventing competition, the people of the town regard him as a monopolist—as having established a little trust of his own. To overcome this objection—or rather that there may be no cause for such an objection to exist—the blind yard is put in. The men who are running the pair of yards congregate in some back room at midnight, or of a Sunday when everybody else is at church, and compare notes. Sometimes these men appear very distant when, in sight of other people, they meet on the street; they will talk about one another, at times in not complimentary terms, in the hearing of others; then again there are periods when seemingly they have a fight, in a trade way, on their hands. All this is to effectually fool the public.

Effectually! That is the phase of the blind yard business that I want briefly to touch on. We may think that the public is stupid, easily deceived, but in this regard we are liable to deceive ourselves. The public is a sly old fox; not the whole of the public, but just enough of it to leaven the rest. There are some men who jump at conclusions just as women do, and they jump pretty straight, too. It must be remembered, however, that before they jump they generally have a cue, some slight excuse for reasoning from cause to effect.

You and I do not care how many blind yards are run, but for the reputation of our brother lumberman for shrewdness when these yards are blind we want them blind. As blind as a bat—and that is not what all of them are.

A yard to be run successfully as a blind must be abso-

lately independent. In a town two yards which are really one, though run under different names, sometimes received their stock in the same shipment. One yard may want, say, 10,000 feet of a certain grade of lumber, and to make up a car enough is added of some other grade in which the other yard is short. A railroad freight agent ought to keep his mouth shut, but in common with the rest of us he does not always do it. No doubt it looked a little odd to him to see the lumber for these two yards come in one car and the freight on the whole paid by one of the yard men. If two men were running yards entirely separate this could be repeatedly done and cause no comment, but in the lumber busi-



"A sly old fox."

ness, as well as out of it, there is that intangible something that tells the story. You cannot get hold of it; it would not convict in a court of law, yet it convinces. In a moment when this freight agent thought he had some news to tell he related to an intimate how these lumbermen divided their invoices, adding, confidently, of course, what he thought was the reason; that intimate, as he usually does, told some one else, and today the whole community thinks, and rightly, of course, that both yards are run by one interest. Yet the members of that community do not tell those yard men that they are trying to hoodwink them. Right here is a point that we should bear in mind: No matter what we may think of a

man, we rarely tell him unless we are mad, drunk or otherwise are in an abnormal condition. If we think a man would steal a horse we do not step up to his face and tell him so. We may be very mean and people will hold their tongues when we are within hearing; or we may be very good and they are not going to come around every morning and tell us of it. Some fine day when another yard is put in that town the inhabitants will metaphorically throw up their hats and hurrah!

A line yard concern let the cat out of the bag when its auditor was seen inspecting the books of the supposed competing yard. In a town I visited inquiry was made of the hotel man as to the location of the yards, and in giving me that information he volunteered the statement that two of those yards, naming them, were run by one man. Mum was the policy of the yard men, but the hotel man had got "onto" them.

In one town a yard man—as yard men frequently do—told me that one of the other yards was his. In my rounds I visited the other yard, and said nothing to the manager concerning the statement the owner of it had made to me. We talked about trade, competition etcetera, and this manager related what he regarded as very mean tricks which had been played on him by his competitor. He was a good actor. Afterward I said to the principal that in that man he had a good blind yard manager, and he replied with some show of satisfaction that he knew it.

The way to run a blind yard is to run it blind. It is different from a blind pig. In non-license towns there are blind pigs, but if nobody knew of their existence they would not live out the week. It is not every man who in spirit and letter can run a blind yard. He does precisely as all of us do in some direction or other—gives himself away.

OBJECTIONS TO SMALL STOCKS.

A business man who is building a barn out of town recently came to me with a tale of woe that evidently welled up from the very bottom of his heart. He was disgusted through and through. The barn is not large and three weeks before the builder wanted to go to work on it he inquired of the retail dealer in a town three miles distant if he had the necessary lumber, and was told that he had not but would get it. At the end of the three weeks, teams were sent for the lumber but it could not be had. Again the teams went, and the employee in the yard sent out lengths of boards which had to be returned. The carpenters who had been engaged to do the work were disappointed and were obliged to knock off. "This fooling had cost me \$10," said the man. "The local manager of the yard seems to be more interested in breaking horses than selling lumber, and the man he leaves in the yard does not know a fourteen from a sixteen-foot board."

Being acquainted with the yard, I was interested in this recital. The yard is located in one of the best one-yard towns to be found anywhere; in fact the location is so favorable that to my knowledge there has been talk of putting in the second yard.

This business policy is not a winner. There are men in the trade who try to skin along on the smallest possible investment, keep not half of a decent stock on hand and depend on ordering even the smallest bills. Maybe it pays them—I don't believe it does. You can't put your finger on a man who has climbed to the top of the trade ladder who has not kept a stock of lumber on hand to meet all ordinary demands. A tuppenny stock means a tuppenny trade. This man in question may do more building, and he swore up hill and down that when that time shall arrive he will haul his lumber from a point nine miles distant. Then the home man will jump to the conclusion that he did not get the bill because the fellows in the other town underbid him. There

are yard dealers who lose sight of the fact that there are times when men consult their convenience as well as the price they pay.

This way of conducting a lumber yard is an excellent one to court competition. There is here and there a man in a one-yard town who seems to think that as he has the only yard he will sell the lumber anyway, and therefore can take his own gait. In several instances I have known these men to wake up some fine morning conscious of the unwelcome fact that some other dealer is "onto" this gait, and will attempt to improve on it.

LEGAL KINKS.

When chatting with a yard man the other day a point came up that may be of interest to you. This yard man gave an order and the car was stuffed with three or four thousand feet more of that particular lumber than he wanted. A contractor was in a hurry for some of the material and as soon as the car arrived the lumber required by him was shoved out and hauled away. Then the yard man began to reflect on the stuffing act. Was he obliged to accept and pay for lumber which he had never ordered? He did not want to be rash and put his foot in it, so he sought the advice of a lawyer. There are lawyers and lawyers, many of them incompetent, but this particular lawyer does not rank with the sticks. He told the yard man that the cheapest way out of it was to pay the bill; that he should have known by the invoice whether he wanted to accept the lumber or not, and that if he did not want it he should have left the car intact subject to the order of the shipper. Having accepted the invoice without protest he virtually accepted the lumber that followed. A recent supreme court decision, the lawyer said, bears directly on this point.

Kink No. 2 pertains to loss in blind yards by fire. There are blind yards scattered all over the country, and it may

transpire that when these yards burn, should such be their unfortunate fate, the owners of the lumber will be unable to collect a cent on the insurance policy. At any rate, a blind yard did burn and the insurance company refused to pay, on the ground that the owner did not insure the lumber and the case is now being contested in court. It would seem from the standpoint taken by this insurance company you have no right to insure my property, nor I yours; that if I insure property claiming it is mine when really it belongs to some one else I am entitled to no recompense in case of loss.

This may prove to be law or it may prove not to be; as said above, the court will decide. If decided to be law it will have a far reaching effect. Life insurance policies are often kept in force by outside parties, and on the face of it this phase of insurance would be equally affected. It has come to my knowledge, however, that there are blind yard men who are more careful regarding the way they are insured than they once were, and also that there are insurance agents, whose interests are of course the interests of the insured, who are going slow in some of those matters which heretofore have been little considered. I was told by an incorporated lumber company that an agent to whom it recently applied for a policy refused to write it in the name of the company, asserting it was not the thing to do, but instead it was written in the names of all the members of the company.

I broached this point to a lawyer, lightly touching him so he would not expect a fee, and it was his version that any man who is authorized to act as agent for others may legally insure the property in his keeping in his own name unless it be definitely stated to the contrary in the policy, and in some policies it is so stated. Of course were one of these cases to be thoroughly discussed by lawyers a score of wherefores and whereases would come to the surface. They would pop up until any saint, who was not a lawyer, would not know whether he was on foot or riding a horse.

LIGHT RIGS FOR LIGHT WORK.

The question of free delivery is one on which dealers do not agree. One of the successful yard men of Kansas said to me he would not want to dispense with free delivery; that in his opinion the expense was more than offset by the convenience. I could no doubt name off-hand a half hundred yard men who agree with this dealer—men who deliver lumber not because they are forced to do so, but as a matter of choice. The other side of the question has its warm advocates. A man who has the management of well toward a hundred yards regards free delivery as opposed to sound business principle; and others could be named who take this view of it. Those dealers who vote nay on the question say that delivery, where only one team is used, involves an extra expense of from \$600 to \$1,000 a year, and that as much lumber can be sold if it is not delivered, while the advocates of free delivery assert that it belongs to the up-to-date methods of conducting any mercantile business. As is usual in other matters wherein we differ, we do not in this one have that charity toward one another which shines as an electric light. I have heard the delivery men refer to their co-laborers who do not deliver as belonging to the foggy class, and the latter to the dealers who deliver as throwing money away.

We should be thankful there is no imperial edict in the matter. When visiting a lumberman, if he is a good fellow and has his pockets full of good cigars, I never think of pounding my head over the fact that he does, or does not, deliver. We return scanty thanks for living in a country where we can do about as we have a mind to, provided we do not interfere too much with the rights of others.

There is one phase of the delivery business, however, that is opposed to common sense. Not long ago I saw a yard man loading a half dozen boards, 16 feet long and 6 inches wide, on a wagon that would carry two tons of coal with safety, behind a big lubber of a horse that could not

trot a mile in six minutes to save him from purgatory. There is no sign of the eternal fitness of things in that kind of business. I suggested to the driver that he might have to carry those boards a long distance, and he said they were going a mile. He probably estimated the distance about right, for he counted up the blocks. Not having much else to do, I looked at my watch when he left the shed, again when he returned, and the time was thirty-five minutes. With a light rig the man ought to have been gone no more than twelve minutes at the longest. I have in mind a yard man who, with his fire-gong, lightning delivery, would have laid those boards down at their destination in four minutes, and easily returned in five more.



"Has his pocket full of good cigars."

Now suppose that four such trips are made from this yard every day, there goes an hour and a half daily, nine hours weekly, forty-five hours monthly, and for the year fifty-four days of ten hours each. Then, into the bargain, the townsmen of this yard man must think every time they see that two-ton rig delivering a few boards, or a bunch of lath, that the lumberman is doing his business in a bungling way.

Yet how many of the yard men who deliver do you think

have light rigs? I do not want to be too hard on them, so I am going to say not 5 percent. The remaining 95 percent go rattling through the streets with big wagons and heavy horses, no matter if they are not carrying fifty pounds. We live in hope, however, for light delivery rigs in the lumber business are so new they are really an innovation. It is a wonder they were not thought of a score of years ago; but the seed has now been sown, and from the few light wagons will spring light wagons galore. That is a miserable word, but it adds variety and picturesqueness to my vocabulary.

HANDY FOR THE DELIVERY MAN.

You no doubt believe in having lumber receipted for when it is delivered. I have seen but one yard man who did not think it was the proper thing and, strange to say, he is one of the most successful retail men in the whole country.

I was hanging around a yard one rainy afternoon, and when the driver came in from a trip he fumbled in his pockets with his wet and dirty fingers and brought out a piece of paper that was folded about three times and which for moisture and dirt about tallied with the driver's hands. This was more than two years ago, but it was recalled to mind last week when I saw a little appliance which overcomes the objections named and which it seems to me is well worth the money. It is an aluminum binder made on purpose for drivers to carry. It will accommodate a blank 4x7 inches and by means of a spring in the back tightly holds any papers which may be placed in it. When a bill is sent to a job the items are written on a blank, the file, or binder, inclosing it is given to the driver, who presents it to the proper person and who attaches his name to the memorandum. There is no removing the blank from the file; the man who signs for the material has a smooth surface on which to write; the driver snaps the cover together, return-

ing it to the office, the bill without dirt or crease and in as good order as it was when taken away. Then if your driver happens to be an old 16 to 1 man he will carry the aluminum file around tickled as a child because it shines like silver.

This apparatus is not exactly new, but no doubt it is new to many of you. Thus far I have seen it in use in only one yard.

THE SET JAW.

In southern Iowa the woman in black asked how much her bill was, and expressed surprise at the amount. The yard man told her that the extra dollar in question was for fitting five windows, including the cartage, and took the money in as cold blood as though he had been a frog. As a looker on I could see the customer was not satisfied, yet the yard man did not treat her as a dissatisfied customer should be treated. When, in trade, we are aware that a thing is going wrong the proper way is to correct it if possible. Seemingly there was no give to this lumberman. He set his jaw, said the bill was so much, and that ended it.

The set jaw in business is not a paying institution. It creates the impression that there is only one side to the deal. It too much reminds one of a policeman who only knows that the law must be enforced, raises his club and drives people on, or in. A little pleasant talk with this woman, followed by the assurance that the bill could not be furnished for less, would have changed the atmosphere. In the spring and fall, when the weather is chilly and our offices are cold, we throw a handful of refuse into the stove, and the chill flees. When the social or business atmosphere is chilly, a few warm words will dispel it. For this purpose warm words come near being a specific. The successful diplomat, the successful salesman, is he who can say the right word at the right place. It is not the man who talks all the time, or who says nothing. When we keep a dogged silence, we

repulse. I knew from this woman's looks that she went away dissatisfied.

"Some women are good customers," I said to the yard man after the woman was out of hearing.

"Yes," said he, "that woman has bought a good deal of stuff of me this season. Her husband died last fall, and she has been giving the house a general overhauling." Yet today, if I know one kind of ginger from another, that woman would not hesitate to go to another yard for the next bill she may want.

Don't you know that our customers in town ought to be



"The woman in black."

our friends? It seems to me that tells the kind of man the tradesman is. If, as fast as you can sell a house or barn bill, you leave in the mouth of the buyer a bad taste, you are doomed in a business way in spite of your religion, politics or good looks.

"Women are the easiest customers in the world," said a Nebraska man. "But you can't handle them in as matter-of-fact a way as you can men. When I have a good woman customer I aim to do something gratuitously for her. I remember a case. A woman built a house that cost something over two thousand, and I furnished everything. I

also got my price. Much is said about the woman and the bargain counter, but when it comes to buying lumber she is a list payer. She was keeping a close watch on the building of the house, and when the carpenter went to hanging the front door she discovered it was not the one she had selected. Down she came and told me I had made a mistake. Then I informed her I had taken the liberty to change the doors; that on thinking it over I had concluded the door she had selected was not as good as the house called for, and that if she would permit me to do it I was going to contribute to the good looks of the house the difference in the price of doors, which was about \$2.50, I believe. Then I got the two cuts together so that she could see the difference. There was really no comparison between them. The door I sent up was a stunner—of the two, too good for the house, but not too good for my purpose. She went away all smiles, and I knew if she had built twenty houses I would have sold her the lumber."

That man is a diplomat. He may possibly have had in mind the time of settlement when he would want the woman to feel as happy as a lark.

No, the set jaw doesn't pay.

WOES OF THE COAL MAN.

You know, beloved, we are not acquainted with one another. Each thinks that the other fellow's business is a little slicker deal than his own, which arises from knowing our own business instead of the other man's. Last week, when our day's labor was done and we were sitting under a tree in front of the hotel making our arms fly like wind mills in a vain attempt to keep the mosquitoes from sucking our rich blood, a hat salesman from Kansas City informed me what a snap I have. "Go where you have a mind to—stop at the best hotels—nothing to sell—simply interview the few lumber dealers in a town and write

up a little piece about them"—was the way he virtually put it. I did not tell him that I had served twenty years' apprenticeship learning the little I know about the lumber industry, and that the little pieces are supposed to be written with a discretion which has come from experience; I didn't tell him what an iron will it required to resist being filled so full of bull ideas when I sit down to chat with my wholesale friends that I would be no good to myself, a paper or to my country, forever and forever, hereafter, as the colored preacher emphasized it; or that while he was sweetly sleeping at dead of night I was often scrambling out of bed to dot down a big thought which like an angel had kindly visited me and which I was afraid, did I not chain it to earth, would flee before morning. I know nothing about the hat business, but I did feel that I could take his cases and sell a hat to every man, woman and child on the street easier than I could concoct one idea, from what the three yard men seen that afternoon had said to me, that would be of the slightest interest if put in print. You see, we don't know one another; if we did, we would carry around a load of mantles of charity and throw one of them around the shoulders of every brother who is stumbling or fainting by the way.

It would be one of the easiest things imaginable for a novice to believe that the coal trade is a bonanza. That novice would think that a boy ten years old could conduct it. It is sold as it is bought; there is no regrading and it requires no particular study to learn the characteristics of the different kinds. Occasionally one kind is sold for another, but that is all in a lifetime and we will not talk about it. But I tell you, the woes which arise from selling coal are as black as its dust. Recently in two days I was in three towns. The first town has 2,800 people, five coal yards, and coal was selling at cost and being delivered into the bargain. In town No. 2, of about the same size, there are seven yards, and coal is selling at cost. Town No. 3 has 8,000 people, eleven coal yards, with a prospect of an-

other, and coal is selling at cost. This all happened in two days, and there are hundreds of towns in which the condition is similar. When these old business heads are running money into rat holes in this way, how would a ten-year-old boy make it go? I am not sure but that often he would show better sense than do some of those who have grown gray in the service.

A yard man of a dozen years' experience, when reducing the contents of his pipe to ash, ran on as follows: "I do not know what kind of a germ it is that is affecting the coal dealers this year. We used to make money on coal. For years my regular price was \$1 above cost, delivered, and as I had my own men and teams, I was not so very much out for delivering. But here we go to pitching the price at cost—\$8. The price is \$5.50 in Chicago, and \$2.50 freight. Every dealer in town is as busy as he can be filling up his customers, and in less than a month the great bulk of the coal used in the city for the next year will be in the bins. Put in at cost!" And the yard man gave a contemptuous look that meant at least a whole sentence.

"Then for awhile the coal business will let up," he continued. "Our money will be scattered throughout the community, not a cent interest will we get on it, or a thank you for the favor which has been shown when it is paid. There is here and there a bill that will never be paid. Last week I refused a man six tons who never pays anything if he can help it, and he generally can help it, and the next day I saw my competitor shoveling in the coal. Now, this is all wrong; we should hang together and let one another know about these customers, but instead we go at it every man for himself, and as a result the devil catches the most of us by the coat tails. Six times eight is forty-eight—almost \$50, you see. It is not a great sum in itself, but there is no profit to counteract it. The dealer is a little new here and he don't know our people. Next winter will come the dribble trade. Maybe at that time we will have gained our senses, and maybe we won't, but if we do get sense it

will be after the main chance has gone by. The water that would have turned the mill will be way down stream. We may get a little profit then, but we will be carting around from 200 to 500 pounds of coal, taking some of it a distance of two miles. Then again it is on these small orders we lose most, as eight times in ten they go to people that you can't collect a cent from. That is the way the coal business begins and ends here. Competition gets hotter and hotter. There is somebody standing around all the time looking for an opportunity for business, and they wade in when it seems to me they must know there isn't a shilling in it. There is one deuced bad condition in this country; it is full of money, the rate of interest is low and people take their money and pitch in."

I was about to file an objection to the statement that plenty of money and low interest is an unfavorable condition, but just then one of the teamsters stopped in front of the window and said that widow somebody was kicking like a mule because her coal was so dusty.

"Wet it down in the load and be sure and tell her it was weighed before it was sprinkled," was the yard man's injunction. Then in a side remark he explained, "If they paid for ten pounds of water they would think they were being swindled out of their eye teeth."

CONVERTED TO REASONABLE PRICES.

To a man in active business, and to one up a tree, the same question is at times regarded differently. I will admit that the man up the tree has little to lose. He can sit perched on a limb and give advice, and no matter to what extent it may miscarry he is outside the pale of law and can only be reached with a club.

The yard man is busy. He may or may not be inclined to take a thorough survey of the situation. He may be hustling to meet a note, bill, or to buy his wife a sealskin. Few of

us know what he is hustling for. It is certain, however, that at times the man up the tree can see farther than can he on the ground. Then at other times the man up the tree gets so dizzy that he cannot see anything.

Nothing in a trade way has brought more sorrow to my heart than to see the retail men keep right on selling at their old prices when wholesale prices were going skyward. I couldn't help it, though. I was told that I didn't know the temper of the lumber-buying community, as if the temper of the lumber-buying community varied from that which buys nails or flour. Lumber buyers simply wouldn't pay the advance, I was told. When asked why I heard no answer more convincing than the one we all used to give when we were boys, "'Cause!"

I saw a Nebraska dealer who carries a half-million stock. He was shoving out lumber at a ridiculously low price and said his customers would not stand an advance. I made the remark that if it was my stock they would have to stand it if they got the lumber; that if they wouldn't stand it I would lock up my office before I would unload at any such figures as he was getting. When I started for the train no doubt he looked on my broad back and said to himself, "There goes another of them fool newspaper tramps!"

I met this yard man again and he recalled our previous conversation. "Do you remember saying if the stock was yours you would lock up the yard before you would run the lumber out at the prices I was selling for?" I told him I believed I did remember saying something to that effect.

"That is what you said," he continued, "and if I had the thing to do over again I am not sure but it is precisely what I would do. I wouldn't shut my yard, but I would follow the advance. I wouldn't sacrifice my lumber. It wasn't the fault of the advance that it didn't make me a clean \$1,500, but it didn't."

Within a short time I have talked with two other yard men who are now looking at the question in about the same light. One of them said that for months he sold lumber

for figures at which it could not be replaced. A good profit that he ought to have made did not materialize. Said the other yard man, "I and my neighbor entered into an idiotic competition, basing our estimates on what our lumber cost us instead of what it was worth. We sold bill after bill that ought to have made us \$4 a thousand when they did not make us \$1."

I say it is too bad, and I have said so right along. There is no use crying for spilt milk, however. The water that has flowed by will not turn a wheel, some poet has said; but there are yard men who can take a hint if they are so disposed, for there are certainly those who ought to be selling



"Another fool newspaper tramp."

lumber for more money than they are getting for it. If they do not pull themselves together in this regard I am fearful that about next spring they will be wrestling with the spirit of regret.

The reason why so many yard men clung to old prices was they did not believe in the permanency of the advance.

I know those who do not believe in it now. They ought to have had a pretty good taste of it by this time; still they are unbelievers, I recently saw one yard man's team hauling lumber from the yard of a neighbor, and was told that this was a daily occurrence. This dealer has no confidence in the stability of the market. He will not stock up, and when out of sorts fills in from his neighbor's piles. He told me there was a shortage of 350,000 feet in his yard. I should not want my foot in that trap.

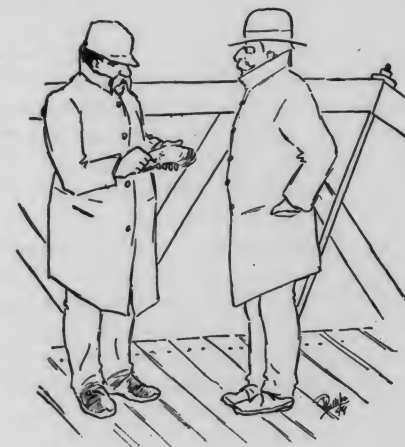
OAK FOR BRIDGES.

Once my best girl said I came as near having a wooden head as any man she had ever seen; but of course it was a joke. She said she thought I would grow fat talking and writing about lumber. Maybe that is so. Wood certainly interests me. I feel at home when I can chat with anybody who knows his business about wood, its growth, supply and consumption. Yesterday I saw a man laying the floor of a new iron bridge, and hitching my imaginary thoroughbred to a fence post I climbed up the bank and learned something about the use of oak for bridges. I struck the right man, for it turned out that he was the official bridge builder for the county, and for five years had been doing nothing but building and repairing bridges. This was one of the central counties of Iowa—an average county possibly—and the information this bridge builder gave me came near knocking me off into the stream.

There are in this county a few more than 1,800 bridges which will average thirty-two feet long, he said. They are all floored with oak. On a chip we figured out that taking as a basis a 2-inch plank, 12 inches wide and 16 feet long, and assuming that the stringers contain three-fourths as many feet as the floor, each bridge would contain 1,632 feet. Some bridges are wider than sixteen feet, and some

are planked with 3-inch instead of 2-inch, so to provide for this surplus we called it an even 2,000 feet for each bridge. Multiplying this amount by the number of bridges we have 3,600,000 feet of oak in the bridges of this one county alone. In many counties oak only is used, and if this holds true in all of the ninety-nine counties of Iowa the total amounts to about 360,000,000 feet.

This does not cover, however, the complete bridge work. Only a bridge that is sixteen feet long or more belongs to



"Figured on a chip."

the county, and how many bridges there are in the county less than sixteen feet long there is no way of knowing.

This oak planking comes from both the north and the south, but mainly from the south, the bridge man thought. White oak is bargained for, but he says that some red is run in. The bulk of it comes through the hands of the retail dealer. Owing to the "lumberman's union," as the bridge builder called it, the best way was to get the plank through the yard men. Up there on the bridge, with the

wind whistling by at railroad speed, and my ears so cold that I wanted to put them in my pocket, I was not disposed to explain the workings of the retail association to the man, and I suppose he slept as sweetly that night as though he knew all about it. Neither was I disposed to say a word that would disabuse his mind of the idea that it was most proper that the bridge plank should be handled by the yard men.

The durability of bridge floors depends largely on the kind of winter we have, I was told. If an open one, and it is necessary to have the horses sharply shod, the corks will cut through the wood rapidly. A winter with plenty of snow is a great saving on the wear and tear of a bridge. He had known 2-inch pine to last only one year. The 3-inch oak he was putting down might last ten years, though that was stretching out the time pretty well, he thought. These 3-inch plank cost the county \$36 a thousand.

At one time it was thought to be an improvement to lay the plank lengthwise of the driveway, but it is no longer done. It had some advantages, but the disadvantages outweigh them. There are men who will go miles around before they will take a threshing outfit over a bridge on which the planks are laid lengthwise, fearful lest they may crowd apart and let some of the traps into the stream. Then, provided the sides of the bridge securely hold the planks from spreading, there will be enough shrinkage to take in a carriage wheel. When the planks are laid crosswise these cracks are beneficial, as they let the snow and rain water through.

GETTING A CUSTOMER'S STANDING.

It is a ticklish thing to tell a man that his credit is good or is not good when you are not dead certain what you are talking about. If you make a mistake it may cost you a good customer, or a good sized account on your books which

from year to year will be labeled n. g. These no good accounts do not tend to cheer a fellow up gloomy days. Too many of them give him the nightmare and take away from him that vein of pleasantry which should bubble right out of him when he has locked his office door and sits down of an evening in the bosom of his family, as it were. "Great guns!" said an old dealer to me, "if I had gone on through life trusting everybody as I did the first year I started in business a national bank would not have floated me."

While experience does not teach us as much as seemingly it ought to we learn a great deal from it. The man quoted above learned at the end of twelve months to pick the men to whom he sold, and that is what we must all learn to do, else, to speak poetically, our craft will pitch headlong on the rocks and knock her brains out. For a new man in a town to trust the worthy and refuse the unworthy is an accomplishment. You open your yard today and in comes a man whom you don't know from Adam and orders a load of lumber. To handle that man right calls for diplomatic skill. You know that the clothes he wears do not tell the story. Dead beats generally dress as well as anybody, and sometimes better than honest folks. He may tell you that he is a merchant, physician, lawyer, editor, but that does not tell the story. There are men in all these classes who would pick your eye teeth out if they got the chance. It is surprising how many men there are in every community who are striving to live easily on the hard earned dollars of others.

Many towns have their credit books, which are of great value, but to know how to use them in a proper way is something of itself to learn. We will say that a new grocer sets up business in your place, and you drop in and order a bill of goods. "There! Great granther!" you exclaim, "I have left my pocketbook in my other breeches. I will drop around in the morning and pay. I suppose that will be all right!"

The next move of this man will probably cause you either to like or dislike him. Suppose he goes to his desk, jerks out

the credit book, opens it, runs his finger down a page until he comes to your name, sees that Vanderbilt stands no higher and says, "Yes, that will be all right. You can have all the goods here you want." You go out of the store not feeling tip top. The idea of looking into a credit book to see whether you pay your debts or not! That is the way they look up the herd; and one of the great efforts of your life is to bring yourself to think that you do not belong to the herd. You should receive special treatment in some way—that is what we all like. Your face should have told that duffer who sells sugar and codfish that you are not beating your way through the world.

The grocer of course made a mistake. Provided it was impossible for him to get a sly peep at the rating book he should have said, "Certainly, that will be all right," and asked you in a friendly way to call again. You would have thought that merchant a great reader of human nature, and ten to one would have bought more goods of him. Then when you had left the store patting yourself on the back the grocer would look you up. If he found you were all right the goods would be delivered; if you were not all right he would drop you a note saying that he could not deliver the goods unless they were paid for. Why this course? you may ask. Simply for the reason that on your first meeting he should treat you as though he considered you perfectly reliable and responsible, which would be the way to inspire your confidence. Should you prove of doubtful credit he would lose nothing by frankly telling you he did not care to put your name on his books. Whichever way the thing might turn he would be on safe ground.

You may do as you have a mind to, but I would never have a rating book in sight on my desk. There are men who are as touchy as old setting hens, and it is a part of a good business man's education to coddle and cater to these men.

I sat in a line yard office in which there was a new manager, and a man came in who said he was thinking of

building a barn. "What's the name?" was asked. "O, yes," responded the manager, as though the name might have been as familiar to him as household words. The conversation had not gone far when the manager looked at his hands, rubbed them together, and asking to be excused for a minute stepped into the private room back of the desk. He soon came out wiping his hands with his handkerchief, and no doubt the prospective customer thought he had been washing them. But his sole object in leaving the man who was thinking of building a barn was to see how he was rated. Then he knew him and began to talk business.

You understand, beloved, that our particular old lumber yards are not of prime importance in the world—that is, the world would wag along without them very comfortably. If people do not want to trade with us they do not have to. There are other yards where they can go and buy their stuff. The moral is we want to fasten lumber buyers to us with hooks of steel; so treat them at every turn and in every transaction that it will be a pleasure for them to come again.

OUT OF HIS PLACE.

Few of us talk to one another from the heart. We talk from the head. We veneer, gild and deceive. The world is full of bluff games. We want our acquaintances to think that we are intellectual and moral Apollos; that we are men without warp, shake or knot, to speak in a lumber sense. My heart goes out to the man who owns right up that he is human, for we all know he is whether he owns up to it or not.

After supper we strolled around to the yard and made ourselves as comfortable as we could in chairs under a tree in front of the office. The sun had gone down and a cool breeze had taken the place of the extreme heat of the day. The yard man had emptied his pipe twice and I had chewed a cigar until it looked sick. "I wonder," he said thoughtfully, "how many men there are in the lumber business who do not right-

fully belong there? How many who simply endure the business because they have to make a living some way, and pitch into lumber because it seems easy or because it is handy."

Then he said he was one of the out-of-place creatures; that as far back as he could remember his taste was for medicine. When he was a little boy his chief delight was to rig up a pair of saddlebags, such as the old-time doctor carried, fit them out with packages of flour, ginger, sugar and bottles of colored water, and then treat some member of the family who would play sick.



"The man's frankness was charming."

"The passion has never left me," he continued, "but when a boy my education was neglected and I was obliged to give up my pet idea. You may think me foolish, but last spring my colt was badly cut on barbed wire, and I took more pride in doctoring up that colt than I did in selling any bill of lumber I have ever handled."

This man's frankness was charming. I knew he was not trying to stuff me. There under the stars, which were beginning to twinkle, he was honest with me, just as at all times, whether the stars twinkle or not, we should be honest with one another.

There is generally something pathetic in the life that is obliged to follow other than its natural bent, for that life, as a rule, is not a happy one. No matter how humble the work of the individual may be, if pride is taken in it—a pride that indicates adaptability—that individual is to be envied by many a man who thinks he is far above him. A man in a yard was recently showing me how he put on a big load of lumber. He was thoroughly interested in his work, was good natured and happy. Happy! Do many other words in the English language imply as much meaning? Throw it on the scales with power, riches, and it will outweigh both of them.

In midsummer my boy and myself were strolling along the finest residence street of St. Paul—along where the railroad magnate, Jim Hill, lives. We were in a lounging mood, so we would walk for a little way and then sit in the shade on the coping, chat and eat peanuts. One of the lessons I want my boy to learn thoroughly is that the thing made is never so great as the maker of it. I think that unless we learn this lesson we go through life ungrateful wretches. I said to my boy that those beautiful houses were simply an expression of industry and persistency and skill; that was all, and that the men who built them were as much greater than the houses as the houses were greater than a dove-cote that we saw perched in a tree. Then I said to him that the most foolish thing in the world is to covet these nice things which other people have. That any man who will pay the price for them may have them. That his father was not a railroad magnate like Jim Hill because he would not pay the price. Then he looked at me inquiringly, thinking, no doubt, that a week before I had told him I could not afford to buy him a pair of patent leather shoes for vacation purposes, and revolving in his mind how I could buy the position of a railroad magnate, even if I wanted it, when I could not afford to buy a pair of shoes. I saw the position, turned the switch a little and told him that if any of these people had more fun in their great mansions that we did in our

little cottage down among the Iowa hogs and cornfields we would like to know it, and then we would pitch in and have a little more fun and beat them. An argument which deals with fun is the one that always appeals to a boy.

All sorts of rigs were passing, and along came the finest one of them all. The sleek horses were light on their feet, the driver sat as straight as a cob and portions of the carriage were gilded. The young lady wore silk and diamonds which blazed from the center of the street to the sidewalk. My boy expressed surprise and admiration.

"What do you see in that carriage?" I asked him.

"I think it is a crutch," was the reply.

It was a crutch. The poor cripple, who was taking her outing, had laid her crutch on the bottom of the carriage and it stuck over the edge of it a foot or more. Then I said to my boy that there were crutches in many of the fine carriages and in many of the magnificent residences. "You would not be compelled to go around on crutches for all of them, would you?" I asked.

"You bet I wouldn't," was his answer.

"You ought to jump right up here on top of Jim Hill's stone fence, swing your hat, hurrah and thank God that you have two good legs under you," I told him.

And he did. He stepped up there and playfully swung his hat, and the man who was sprinkling the lawn looked at us as though we were two hoboes and that he had a mind to set the dog on us. Leaving the aristocratic neighborhood, we wandered down town and laid in a 25-cent New England boiled dinner with all the eclat, as they say in the drawing rooms, with which we would have dined at the Ryan with a colored gentleman behind the chair of each of us.

He is a mean creature who will not sympathize with a fellow man, and you know it is generally done by citing some of our own woes. If your wife should say she had been suffering from the toothache, some other man's wife would chip in and tell of the time when she had the toothache to beat the band. That was all I could do with this

yard man who is peddling boards when it would be more to his taste to peddle pills—cite my own grievances.

He was told that I was not doing that which I would most like to do, but that I could not do it, and there was an end to it. I expected, however, that the desire would in due time be realized. The Almighty had sown the seed, and some time the fruit would follow. It might be in this life, it might be a hundred years hence, or it might be a million years in the future. I can wait, and am not going to mourn myself baldheaded longing for it. My faith in the power that is over all is absolute; and His will not mine will be done, no matter what my choice in the matter may be. He said such a belief might be consoling to me, but it was his wish to achieve his desires in this life, as he knew nothing about any other. I replied that, in my opinion, this life, as compared with the vast vista that was opening before us, is a mere scratch of a pencil on a white sheet that would cover the state, and that for aught we knew cycles hence he would be prescribing for the angels.

Then the whistle which tears people apart sounded out east of the town, and, grasping my grip and accompanied by my friend the yard man, I made my way to the station.

GATES AND DOORS.

It would have been an interesting item if I had kept tab on the number of useless gates and gateways without gates, that I have seen. These gates were built with the best of intentions—for the purpose of keeping dogs, tramps and thieves out of the yard—but gradually they fell into a state of innocuous desuetude, and there they are, or rather there they are not when you want them. Some of them are leaning up against the fence or shed, while others are nowhere, probably having been used for kindling wood.

He is a matter-of-fact man who keeps his yard in ship shape from one year's end to the other. I saw a new yard

the other day and it looked as though it had just come out of a band box. But the question is, will this yard man weary in well doing? He probably will. The most of us do. There is a certain point—a mean ground—between sickness and health, success and failure, right and wrong, when we are inclined to let things take their own way. There is nothing decided in the condition, and so we let 'er slide. It is that way with gates. When the rust has eaten the hinges so nearly off that the gate begins to totter as with old age we let it go until they are entirely eaten off, and then we may put on new hinges; or, thinking that we have



"Pile the gate up against the fence."

never been stolen poor, we may pile the gate up against the fence. I say we may, for so many of us do it that way.

There is this man who has just put in a new yard. He is really enthusiastic. In this regard he is like a newly married man who swears that the dear creature he has taken unto himself shall lead a life of comfort and happiness, but who in a few short months permits her to get out of bed in cold weather and build the fire, and leaves her home nights to cry and wonder why the heart of man is so changeable, while he is out drinking beer with his old boon companions. I tell you if I were a young lady I would prefer going it

alone and becoming a woman suffragist to marrying a fellow who has old boon companions on the outside. Or, if I did marry him I would go out and shoot these old boon companions, and then I might be able to call my husband my own. This advice to the young ladies is from a man's standpoint of course, but he has several times seen how this old boon companion business works.

I should like to walk into this slick yard ten years from today and see how things are—see if the floor is kept scrubbed and the windows washed. I am willing to wager there will be a change. At the end of ten years it will likely be an ordinary old plug of a country yard. I am casting no reflections on this yard man, but that is precisely the way the majority of us lapse. Surely he who can hold out faithful to the end is entitled to the crown and moreover he gets it.

I was with a retail man when he was shutting up his yard at night, and by main strength he took hold of the gate and lifted it around into position. The lower hinge was broken off and he was obliged to do this. Very likely, to start with, this same man said in his mind that he would run a model lumber yard. Some writer who, if he knew what he was talking about must have been there, said that hell is paved with good intentions, and it wouldn't surprise me if he spoke rightly.

I can't imagine why swinging gates should be endured around a yard, except in those few cases where none other can be used. The gate that is hung from the top and rolls best answers the bill in the long run. It will save boards and sizzling words. It will cost a little more to start with, but in the end it will be a hundred times cheaper.

The shed door is akin to the gate. There is a kind of low, closed shed that on one side is nearly all doors. With very few exceptions these doors are on hinges, open, outward of course, and in a heavy wind are about as controllable as a kite. If you can slam them shut quickly all right; if not they may slam you. When you are sitting serenely in

your office the first you know away they go, slam bang! They are liable to tear loose or make a man think that dynamiters are around his place. I believe I have seen but one shed of this style with rolling doors which could be opened six inches, or three feet, and at all times and in all kinds of weather stay open. Said the man who had this shed, "I can handle these doors from the inside. I do not have to go out in a driving rain to close them, and I am not trembling lest a wind storm blow them over into the next county." I almost feel like risking the little reputation I have by saying that they are a great improvement on the old kind that swings.

A yard man called my attention to the doors on his closed shed. "I have no more double doors," he said, "for a single one answers the purpose much better. I used to have two doors, but I have got through with them. They would never meet in any kind of shape, and then to be securely held at the bottom there ought to be a slotted post for them to slide into, and that is always in the way. It takes no longer to open a single door than it does one of a pair." Then he wanted me to "just place one finger" on the door and see how easily it rolled. It was a rather tough proposition for that one finger to push it, still it rolled easily for a door of that size.

"I never have any trouble with my doors except with that of my safe," said a yard man who was tapped on the subject of doors. "That opens and lets all the money out of it."

TAKING WINTER EASY.

There are numberless yard men who buy from hand to mouth. They want no more stock on hand than will serve their purpose for a short period. It was really pleasing to meet a dealer whose method is different from this. Said he: "When it comes winter I want a stock that will carry me through. I don't want to be bothered every week hunting

through my stock and piecing up on this or that grade. In fact, I want to take the dull season quietly. I want to take the winter coolly—in the best sense of that word."

I had not before heard a yard man talk just like that. You rarely hear a business man express the opinion that he ought to inject rest or comfort into his business. He thinks he must be on the jump. If he rest, it must be away from business. He must go to the mountains or seashore. Get away from home, that is the idea. Now, as a rule, is it better to do this, or so live as to avoid the necessity of it? I have been in the homes of many lumbermen. They had pleasant families, pictures, books in profusion, finely appointed rooms; and seeing these I have wondered where else on earth they could get so much quiet and comfort if only they would not tear themselves in pieces outside so they were incapable of home enjoyment.

More and more I become enamored of the man who so adjusts the machinery of life as to overcome all friction possible. I like the man who does not wear his body and mind out, and the mind will take care of itself if the body is kept in ship shape. If we live rationally the mind keeps on top, just the place it should be. I don't like to see the fever of business burn the good red blood out. On my rounds there is a yard man whom many of you know. He says there is always a place for an extra plate at his table, and more than once that plate has been set before me. The home is an elegant one, and I have observed that the prime object of it is comfort. It is a fine looker, but it wasn't built for people to look at. The parlor, with its expensive furnishings, is none too good even to smoke in; and I have observed that the good wife does not object to smoke in the room. She does not say, "O, dear, how the cigar smoke does make my curtains smell!" I think in a home a mighty sight depends on the wife. I don't know but it is almost as much of a duty to make her home pleasant as it is to vote. It is no wonder that some men are eager to be somewhere except home. This man does an immense amount of business. He is fat, too.

He looks as though he could keep right on for fifty years yet. The genuine comforts of his home, I imagine, are a foil to the cares of business life. Every hour he puts in there is a tonic.

In our condition of culture and civilization there are many things which do not pay. At the time we think they are the stuff, but later on we learn with regret that they have consumed. The mad rush leads to madness—no logic can get around that. Therefore the attitude of this yard man who wants to put in the winter with as little care as possible in order that he may go forth refreshed in the spring, I say, is a sane idea. He does not consider that the interest on the stock that he may not use this month or next is money thrown to the dogs, but rather as a means to comfort and recuperation.

SENSELESS OBJECTION TO DOORS.

We were talking about doors, and the yard man said he had a door he wanted to show me. Going into a rear room he brought out one that came from the far west and sat it up against the wall.

"What do you think of it?" he asked.

"I think it is a fine door," I replied, in a breezy business way, cracking it with my knuckles; and a fine door it was, clear as a quill and well manufactured.

"Are you selling many of them?" I inquired.

"Yes," said he, "and I would sell more of them if it wasn't for the carpenters"—though in reality his reply had a dash of sulphur in it.

Then to get in the right mood to tell his story, he stepped around in a fidgety way and said that as a rule the carpenter is an oracle; that he knows more than the rest of mankind and doesn't know how little he knows himself. I told him that was one of the best definitions of the average carpenter I had ever heard. "One of them was in here this forenoon," he said, "a young sprig who had been car-

pentering as many as two years. He had been building a little addition to a house and wanted two inside doors. I told him I had a daisy, a cedar door, and showed him these. I had no sooner set them out than his nose went up. He said he wouldn't use those doors if they were given to him. I asked him why, and then he was in a box. He didn't know why he didn't like them. I doubt if ever before he had seen a cedar door. Where I was green was that I ought to have kept the fact between my teeth that



"His nose went up."

the doors were cedar. I believe then I would have sold them."

"Off the same piece of cloth as the carpenter's objection to hemlock," I remarked.

"Precisely," said he, "and I remember still the story you told of the Chicago dealer who sold hemlock under the name of 'rock pine.' That was a good way to treat them."

A man to keep up with the times must carry a variety of

doors these days. Pine in the white of the different grades and sizes, grained doors, front doors, cedar, doors with yellow pine panels, storm and screen doors—and maybe some of them may have gotten away from me. The first I had to do with a retail lumber yard, the stock of doors could be carried off on a strong man's back, but it is a poorly equipped yard now that does not have piled in the stock room as many as two horses could draw. And that is the growing tendency right along in the retail business—variety.

I sometimes think that the single yard man at some cross-roads town where little is known about the style in "wood goods," to quote our English friends, has a snap. In larger towns where competition is as hot as a pepper pod, one dealer desiring to get in under the skins of the others will introduce a new article which can be sold a little cheaper than the old one, or sometimes for the novelty of it. The others finding this out will follow suit, and thus the varieties pile up; and I do not imagine the end is yet.

CANCELING AND REGISTERING ORDERS.

A yard man said he had quit buying of a house of which first and last he had bought a pile of lumber, for the reason that it did not stand by the prices quoted by its salesman. I told him I would have quit, too. This is one of several similar complaints I have heard. There are certain wholesalers who send out traveling men, and then when the occasion suits them use their own sweet will as to whether they will fill the orders turned in at the prices quoted by the salesman to the yard man. I do not say they do this as a steady diet, but they do it all the same. I know there are two sides to every story, but in at least one of these cases the evidence was so plain that there is no earthly doubt that the wholesale dealer flew the track.

"I wanted the lumber," said the yard man, "and about

the time I expected it was on the way to me I received a polite letter stating that the agent had inadvertently quoted me a price at which it could not be furnished. Inadvertently! There was no inadvertency about it. The agent evidently turned the question over in his mind before he gave me the price. He quoted it deliberately, and repeated it two or three times."

Now, I like both a man and a mouse. In a way a mouse is as marvelous a creation as a man. It is Whitman, I believe, who says that a mouse will put a billion infidels to flight. But the mouse that I like goes on four legs, and has fur. When I see a mouse walking around on two legs and wearing a hat I have no admiration for it. And when a wholesale dealer in lumber, or any other commodity, will repudiate the prices given by his authorized salesman, he comes mighty near, without calling names, being a close imitation of the little fellows that my best girl these days is trying to bait with cheese and crush to death in the cellar.

Legally, you of course know how the matter stands. Morally, you ought to know how it stands, and any man who will stand off both legal and moral obligations is a tough breed of cats. There is no question but that these articles are read as thoroughly by wholesale dealers as by yard men, and I want to ask them how many of their number would refuse to fill an order because they thought they ought to have \$2 a thousand more than it was sold for by their agent? Unfortunately we can't hear the reply, but I will take the liberty to answer the question. Mighty few! From Dan to Bersheba I know the wholesale men pretty well, and I wouldn't know where to put my finger on three of them who, in my opinion, would not stay by their traveling men night and day. I am acquainted with wholesale men who, I know, should their agent sell Bill Jones, of Podunk, a car of dimension today for 20 cents a thousand, that car would be delivered just as promptly as though it were sold at list prices. Why would it? First, for the

reason that these wholesale men are not mice, and second, that they have confidence that their traveling men have a judgment of their own, and would not humiliate them if you would give them a car of lumber. And do you ever think, when you are in the thinking business, how humiliating it must be to a salesman to take an order, and then have the "old man" say in effect, "O, you blank fool; we can't stand by any such thing as that!" As much of a rhinoceros hide as I have I wouldn't be placed in that posi-



"Sitting in a hotel with a salesman."

tion for a four-dollar bill. If you have no faith in your traveling man call him in and advise him to go to a kindergarten, but for pity sake don't make him so ashamed of himself by your mousey conduct that he wouldn't want to look a locomotive in the face.

The other evening I was sitting in a hotel with a salesman, he smoking a cigar and I chewing one, and the counterpart of this question was the subject of our talk. I like to fall in with these traveling salesmen, for to a man they treat me well in every sense of the word. No man is more

companionable than the one on the road, no matter whether he may sell lumber or lumber wagons. The "open road," as a poet has termed it, gives a heartiness and broadness to a fellow that I sometimes think is never acquired under a roof. These salesmen are not always to the pains, however, to let me in on the ground floor of the situation—the villains! Thus, the other day, I asked one of them how prices were, and he said they were so stiff that the hand of fate couldn't bend them. I didn't dispute him, but the joke of it was that not three hours before I had seen invoices from this very salesman's house, of bills sold by this very salesman, and—but never mind. Yard men all over this section of the country show me their invoices, and I wish I knew everything there is to be known in this world as definitely as I know the price at which lumber is selling in many instances.

We were talking about the yard man canceling orders, and I tell you, my friends, there is a sin to look after, and root up, on our side of the house. This salesman didn't put it in my ear, either. I have known it right along. The plain and stubborn fact is that a yard man has no more right to cancel an order than a wholesale man has not to fill one. They are of the same stripe. They are twin brothers, and I would never think of spanking one of them without giving it to the other. A yard man brought up this subject on the street not long ago. "When a dealer orders a bill of lumber it is a contract which should not be violated," said he. "The best way is to have it put down in black and white, so there may be no doubt or misunderstanding."

That is business on the level. Yet I have known yard men, I am sorry to say, who today would give an order for a bill of lumber and tomorrow as coolly countermand it. I do not say but there are times when it would be to a man's interest to countermand an order—one can imagine such a condition—but at no time can a yard man honorably do so and have his finger exclusively in the pie. If I

buy a car of lumber, and afterward find that I do not need it, I have no right to say peremptorily to the man of whom it was bought that he need not ship it to me. I may ask him not to ship it, and then he may grant the request if he so like. It is a matter of another agreement, just as the purchase of the lumber was a matter of agreement.

This salesman said that he had sold lumber and had the order in part canceled for the reason that another salesman who was following in his wake had underbid him. I hope he is mistaken. I don't like to believe it. If I were a girl I wouldn't want to marry a yard man who would go back on himself for a matter of 50 cents a thousand on a carload of lumber, for I should expect that as soon as his love cooled a little he would go back on me. Nine times in ten, or oftener, respect begins at home, and if a man has no respect for himself look out for him. If a man did not buy as sharp as he might the way would be, I think, to take the lumber and look a little out the next time.

If I wanted to keep both my financial and moral credit good I should think twice before asking a wholesale dealer to cancel an order that I had given in cold blood. No matter what good reason I might have on my part I should be thinking that the wholesale man might say, "That fool hasn't enough brains to know what he does want."

So you see, just as we would grade a board, we must look at this question on both of its sides.

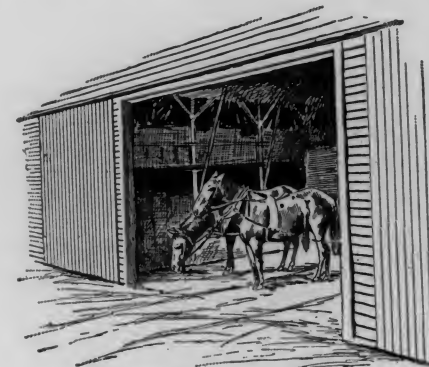
SALT IN SHED ALLEYS.

We all want to do away with dust in our shed alleys if possible. We don't want it spreading itself over the lumber. We don't want to be made uncomfortable by the dust that is kicked up when men and teams are working in the sheds. There are alleys which closely resemble ash heaps. We dudes with nicely polished boots can't go the length of them without being obliged to part with another dime for a

fresh shine. Then it speaks so well for a lumberman to have everything in ship shape. When he has a good shed, with the alleys as dusty as a public highway, it does not look as though he had quite finished his job. A few loads of gravel or cinders would have made it better.

All yard men are not advocates of using salt in alleys. There are those who have used it and say the idea that it will down dust is a humbug. These men are mistaken; at any rate their assertion is too sweeping. They probably did not properly apply the salt. They may not have used enough of it.

This using of salt to allay dust is an odd proposition,



"For horses to eat."

anyhow. When the heading, as it stands above, had been clicked off on the typewriter, my best girl was called in and asked what she thought such a thing could mean; why lumbermen should put salt in their shed alleys? "Why, I suppose it is for horses to eat!" she said. Select a hundred novices and every one of them would say something of that kind; the thought would not enter their heads that dust could be overcome by salt.

There is a precaution which must be taken around these

alleys which have received the salt treatment, however. If lumber is piled along the edges of them, as it often is before it is put in the bins, the bottom boards soon become damp. Not long ago I was in an alley that was so piled with lumber that a team could hardly drive through, and the bins were not full, either. That man's alley ought to be sprinkled with salt so he would have to put his lumber where it belonged, for you will probably agree with me that an alley is not fit piling ground.

ON THE ALERT FOR TROUBLE.

We are not so well balanced as to warrant bragging about ourselves. In our school days we study logic, and when we get out of school we make the same use of logic that a pig does. If I thought you understood Dutch I should say that the entire business community is on the qui vive as to what the future shall bring forth. Today a yard man told me that trade had been good this season, and then he drew a long breath and remarked that he didn't know what it would be next!

Here prosperity is fairly tumbling over herself to get in our way. Barring some sore affliction, if you are not as happy this minute as you ever have been it is your own fault. If that is so, why not let well enough alone? Why should we be everlastingly tapping the future, as it were, to see what will run out of it?

Now let me tell you a thing that I suppose you all know, still I feel in a mood to remind you of it. These good times may continue for several years, or they may not. But it is not absolutely necessary for the good of the country that sooner or later they terminate. Should there be no break in the present condition of affairs we would all get so rich and high headed that we wouldn't work. We would run after false gods, wear none but imported clothes, take to fast horses and wine, and then the process of decay would set in. There would be a tumble, and down we would go flat on our

back just as old Athens did. Every once in a while you strike a balance sheet to find out where you are at. Permitting me to judge, that is precisely what the good Lord occasionally is doing for us. He is watching us more closely all the time than we think he is. When we get too proud and rich, and step too high, he knocks the props from under us, and down we come to earth again.

Suppose, for an instance, that those lumber manufacturers up in Minnesota and Wisconsin should keep right along as they have been doing for a couple of years? In ten years they would own the earth, and every mother's son of them would be in the senate. It will not be permitted. By and by old Fate, with his lasso, will stalk up through that country and corral them again.

"If building will only keep up for a few years!" said a yard man. I will leave it to you, however, that if this season's volume of business should keep up it would not bring about a deplorable condition, and in the end be one of the worst things that could come to us. Every town would be overbuilt. Many a farmer would have two houses on his hands, and could live in only one of them. There would be empty elevators, and a surplus of railroads. We can't with safety build much faster than human beings come into the world. If we get a little ahead of them we must wait until they catch up. If they get a little ahead of us we can hurry just as we have been doing this year. People and buildings—they balance one another.

If I had made \$2,000 this year, as a yard man has with whom I was talking the other day, simply by the advance of lumber, I wouldn't be worrying over the coming presidential year as he is. I listened to this man's gloomy forebodings for several minutes like a good little boy, and then, when I had become tired, I could not help remarking, "Why, man, let's not tear our undergarments entirely off this cold weather, but keep our powder as dry as we can, and patiently wait."

Now, honestly, I am little in sympathy with this crazy

desire which takes possession of so many people to get hold of everything within their reach. They break their necks in a mad rush to have another dollar's worth of goods to pay taxes on, and the more dollars' worth they have the worse they lie to the assessor. That is the way it is with all of us. And this idiotic scurry, too, by men who have as



"The more they lie to the assessor."

much money as the law ought to allow. Don't you know that this life we are now enjoying every day is only a minute section of the same life that will stretch on and on through years which will be numberless as the stars? Then where is the sense in starting out on such a gallop? If we are not careful we will tire ourselves out scoring. We need dollars

in our pockets, but just as badly we need patience, appreciation, charity and contentment in our heads and hearts.

I liked the way a yard man talked a couple of months ago. Said he, "I have got over worrying. I can't look back and see where it did me a cent's worth of good, but on the other hand it did me dollars' worth of harm. Why, blast it, I had nervous prostration once over a thing that never happened! For fifteen years I have sold lumber, and I expect to sell it as long as I run a yard. The lumber trade comes every season as regularly as the corn crop—not every year the same, and if it did it would become monotonous. No man knows what is in store for him. It may not be so good; if not grin and bear it, as we have got to any way. It is a mistake for any man who means to be light complexioned, and tends to his business, to think that it is all bad luck that is staring him in the face. How do I know but this town will burn tonight, and the rebuilding of it call for all the lumber I can handle for six months? I got into that fix once!"

I should feel safe to give a written guarantee that this man who has learned to take life like a rational being, that is, taking it as it comes, and content so to take it, gets more comfort and happiness to the square foot than all the yard men in his country whose eyes are bulging to catch sight of some devil in the distance, and who are prancing over the highway of life so madly as to make blood blisters and gum-boils on their feet.

A TRADE PULLER.

There is no question in my mind that the modern closed shed pulls trade. It has the quality of the magnet. So firmly am I convinced of this that were I to open a new yard I would build a closed shed, provided always of course that I could borrow the money. If the other sheds in the town were open, all the more eager I should be that mine should be unlike them. I should want the shed a big one, too; one

that would loom up like a steeped cathedral. For what? For advertising, as one reason. It does not create much commotion when a fellow buys a few cars of lumber and piles it out on the prairie, but when he starts in by building a great shed the farmer stares. He thinks that the man who is building such a shed as that is going to bore with a big auger, and it is human nature that he will want to be there to catch some of the chips. A yard man told me that his shed was so much talked about that farmers came twenty miles to buy lumber of him. You may laugh in your sleeves at a farmer who would do this; so might I, but at the same time it would please us to sell the lumber. Oftentimes gain comes by throwing a glamor over the minds of men. A tight rope walker once told me that it was no more difficult to walk a rope fifty feet from the ground than though it was ten feet. "But," said he, "the people think it is." There, you see, is the same idea—you want to get the people thinking in a particular direction. A big lumber shed impresses itself upon the mind. It is something more than the usual, something to talk about and look at. No matter how we may get business it is through advertising of some sort, though we may call it by some other name.

STORM DOORS.

A storm door is a new idea, comparatively. Our forefathers did not know what a storm door was. If there was one good solid door between them and the storm they were content. I have seen happy homes which did not have even a panel door in them.

For years storm doors, mechanically, have been an abomination. Any old thing was good enough for such a door, it was thought. Why a storm door that was in full sight for several months of the year should not present a decent appearance was a question not asked. After this it will be thought as necessary to have a good looking storm

door as it is to wear a sleek overcoat. We common mortals never think of doing a thing until somebody has set the pace.

Then again, it was not thought orthodox to have a light of glass in a storm door. By all means it must be a solid door. You never knew who was knocking for admission until the door was opened. But in this great age we are marching on and on, and among other things we have reorganized the storm door. It is so improved that it does not look like a relative to the one that was in use even three or four years ago.



"Samples standing out in front."

The yards are making something of a point selling storm doors these days. In one week I saw samples standing out in front of more than twenty-five lumber offices. That is the way to do it, too. It would not injure the business of the average lumberman if he would make more of a

display of some of his goods. His brother merchants beat him out of sight in this regard. What if the yard man bought a bundle of storm doors and tucked them away in his sash and door room? Nobody except some one who might make the inquiry would know he had them. An acquaintance of mine had a carpenter make a storm door for him last fall. I asked him why he did not go over to one of the lumber yards and get a door that looked like something, and he said he had not supposed they kept them! That is the way it goes when we hide our light under a bushel.

These doors I see around the country are marked to sell at from \$1.75 to \$2 each. They are a good looking panel door, with a good sized light of glass in them, and many of them are grained. One yard man carried them both grained and in the white. He said the white was the better seller, for as a rule the door was painted to match the color of the house. Said he, "I have had no luck with grained doors of any kind. There seems to be no place for them to fit in. Then there is no graining done nowadays anyway. It seems to me that the grained door came in about twenty years too late."

That is a fact, there is no graining done now except on these doors, still there are yard men who have told me they are among their best sellers.

LOCATION AND COMPETITION.

I listened to a conversation on the subject of yard location that was interesting. A salesman could not get out of town until evening, the yard man was not busy, so they told stories and talked about the lumber business. I cannot repeat the stories, for it is a peculiarity of mine that I am unable to remember a story over night. I have often regretted it; I have tried to train myself to the contrary, but it is no use; they won't stick. I hear stories every day, and of the

thousands that with joy and pleasure to which I have listened I know that I couldn't repeat a dozen of them if I was to be hanged for it. It is not a matter of memory, and I don't know what it is. On the other hand, I could listen to lumber gossip for hours, and without taking a note to assist me would guarantee to produce it almost verbatim. I wish somebody would tell me what section of my old thinker is out of tune.

The salesman said he was occasionally asked where there



"Talked about the lumber business."

is an opening for a yard, but that at present he knew of no good one. It appeared to him that there is a surplus of yards. If he was bound to put in a yard he would go into one of the new towns on some of the railroads which are building. He would expect to have plenty of competition, but being on the ground as soon as any of them he would stand a better chance than though we were to camp alongside of dealers who already had an acquaintance and an established trade.

"What advantage has a new yard?" I ventured to ask.

"Well," replied the salesman, evidently weighing his words, "it has a slight advantage in being new. You know the old adage about the new broom. There are people who will go to a new business place expecting that the man who is running it will make some concessions in order to get trade. If I started a new yard I should not expect to get on much unless I did make concessions. First of all, I should aim to pool; and if that couldn't be done I should aim to undersell the other fellows, and then to my sorrow," he continued with a laugh, "the other fellows might aim to undersell me."

The yard man remarked that ordinarily he should be very "skeery" about starting a yard. "I should prefer, ten to one, to buy a yard out," he said. "I have had experience of both kinds, and I should prefer to buy. If a man should buy out my neighbor I should regard him as a legitimate competitor and meet him on that ground, but if anybody should put in a third yard here I have an idea that the pots of war paint would be brought out."

No doubt the result would be about as the dealer portrayed it, still it amused me to hear him talk about a "legitimate competitor!" The country is full of people who ought to read the constitution of the United States and the declaration of independence.

In this talk about location and competition I thought that the salesman and yard man overlooked an important phase of the question. They did not say a word about the difference there is in competitors. No doubt I have said before that in my opinion the success of a new yard man depends as much on the nature of his competitors as on the location.

Location is of importance, but it isn't everything. There are retail lumbermen who are genuine bull dogs, and who will hang on until their backs are broken. There are others in whom there is no fight. They may be quakers, and possibly cowards. There are those who would look at you askance if you had the cheek to attempt to sell boards in a town

on the trade of which they think they have a mortgage, and still others who would make the best of it and treat you like a gentleman. Hence, I say, if I were intending to start a yard in a town I should first of all make a study of the men already selling lumber there. I would endeavor to size them up. If they had heavy jaws and looked as though they might easily be converted into a thunderstorm I might count the ties on to the next town. I know of towns which at first blush you would say would afford business for more yards, but if you or I should put one in there our hides would be stripped from our back, or the other fellow's would. I know of other towns in which, if I felt so disposed, I would not hesitate a moment to put in a yard. The character of the dealers in these towns would influence my decision. It's men that make history, and sometimes they make one kind and sometimes another.

SLOW PAYING FARMERS.

There was a time when I labored under the delusion that collections were the barometer of the degree of prosperity, but I have gotten bravely over it. It holds true only in minor part. A man may be very prosperous, yet travel as slow as a mud turtle up to the captain's desk to settle his bill. The farmers are owing the yard men of this country a mint of money, yet many of these farmers have money to burn. "The better off the farmer becomes the slower he is to pay," a dealer remarked who is located in a very fine agricultural district. "They know they are good; they think you know they are good, and consequently they want time until it wearies me."

I somewhat doubt if a knowledge of the financial status of the western farmer is common property. In conversation with a banker on this point, he said: "It may not be generally known that the man who can secure a mortgage on real estate for 5 percent is indebted to the farmer for that low

rate of interest. It isn't the banker who has knocked the rate. A large amount of eastern money has come in here, but that hasn't done it. Had the farmer been obliged to come to the bank for his loans interest would be higher than it is today. As it is the farmer loans money to the farmer. The farmers have been pulling a good deal of money out of Mother Earth, and they know of no place where they can place the surplus so safely as in a mortgage on their neighbor's farm. In their effort to do this they have underbid the banks. When we were getting 8 percent they went us a cent better. Then we dropped to 7 and they dropped to 6. We went to 6 and the farmer said to his neighbor 5. We have come to 5, and whether the farmer will come to 4 is an open question, though it wouldn't surprise me if he did. Yes, sir, the farmer has set the rate of interest on mortgage loans throughout this whole section of country."

I have made inquiry concerning the deposits of the farmers in some of the towns. In a place of 5,000 inhabitants I was told by a banker that the "man with the hoe" had \$325,000 in the banks. In a very moderate sized town a grange bank was opened, and the manager of it said if the deposits to start with were \$50,000 he would be satisfied, but in less than three weeks there was an even five times that amount. In several towns I have looked into this matter, and in every instance the figures have indicated hundreds of thousands.

We need not lie awake nights worrying over the condition of the farmer. During all the years that I spuddled around in a porcelain bath tub in a city I was given to regarding the farmer somewhat as the caricaturist, who wears his spring overcoat all winter and sells jokes for 10 cents each to the newspapers, painted him. But I tell you, my city friends, you don't know the farmer. You underrate him every day of your life. I wish every man who lives in a brown stone or marble front felt as independent as does the farmer who wears his sheepskin jacket and German socks. This farmer feels that so far as this world is concerned he is perched right on the rock of ages, and that it is

not necessary to sharpen his finger and toe nails every day to keep a hold, either.

"But he won't pay; darn him, he won't pay!" said a yard man. "I have a customer who owns 2,000 acres of land, every acre of it clear. Let's see! That land is worth \$40 an acre, \$80,000 all told. Then he has so many cattle you can't count them. When he owes a bill for lumber it is worth a good commission to get it. He will pay no more attention to a statement than though it was a yaller dog. Yet when I go for him, and can find him, he will pull out his check book with the blandest smile on his face you ever seen. I can't sue him; that wouldn't do. You couldn't pull a note out of him with a log chain. He is away to Omaha or Kansas City nearly as much as he is at home, and I may drive out to his place a dozen times without seeing him. That's the way it goes."

"How much interest do you get out of the farmers on accounts which run from six to twelve months?" I asked.

"Not on an average of 1 percent," was the reply.

There are dealers who will not sell lumber on any such terms, but there are always others, and these others will sell it on any old terms.

It is the bane of the life of some yard men that they cannot collect in a way at all to their liking. Within a week I walked through a shed that was well filled with lumber. This man knows me pretty well and does not hesitate to tell me things that perhaps, on first sight, you wouldn't. He said with some show of pride, "I don't owe a cent on this stock."

"Blamed glad to hear it," I said.

"But I wouldn't let my customers know that," he continued. "When I collect I go out with a handful of bills and, wanting some excuse to prod them, I must tell them that I have bills coming due which must be paid!"

Then we sat down by the stove, stuck our feet on the fender, and talked about the cussedness in human nature that holds us back from paying our debts when they are due.

THE RIGHT KIND OF STATIONERY.

The stationery of many a yard man needs to be overhauled. The last time I came home from a trip a letter awaited me, and on the sheet it was announced that So-and-so sold lumber at such a place. Thus far it was proper, but this information was put on with a rubber stamp, and that did seem as improper to me as the very Old Harry. If that yard man felt as I do he would take that stamp and grind it under his heel. Why? Because in the eyes of a business man who has seen a part of the world and is half up to its best ways this printing by means of a rubber stamp is an abomination. The job looks as if it had been struck by a very miserable kind of lightning. It is the looks of the thing I object to.

Now suppose I should come around to see you looking like a tramp—dirty face; whiskers half an inch long, holes in the knees of my pants, overcoat looking as though I had made my bed in the alley, what would you think of me? What impression would it give you of the concern that sends me out? You would get off in the corner and whisper to yourself, "Well, if that isn't the blankest thing that ever happened!" You see, it wouldn't do. It would be doing everybody concerned rank injustice. On one trip I was asked by one lumberman to go to church with him, by another to go to his home to dinner, by another to go to a charity ball. Unless I dressed in the height of fashion I would get no chance at these swell functions. Go into the wholesale districts and see what fine offices they have, what pretty typewriters, what beautiful stationery. When a letter over which a rubber stamp has slobbered is fired into one of these elegant offices I imagine it is regarded as you would regard me if I should stumble into your place dressed like a Weary Willie.

This is not saying that all of you can have well printed stationery right away. Having been associated with printing houses more or less I know the shortcomings of an

occasional country printer. It is not unusual for him to turn out a job that looks as though a mule's hoof had been inked and he had kicked against a sheet of paper. But notwithstanding your job may be poor, if it came from a printing office you have shown your good intentions. The blame then rests on the printer. Don't put up with such a job the second time though. Talk turkey to the printer, as we boys used to say. Tell him that by the long-horned spoon if he doesn't grease up his old press and turn you out decent work you will go to Chicago, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, St. Louis for it. Should you carry out your threat the editor would probably run in a letter, signed by "Old Citizen," asking how a town can get along when its people send away for their goods? Never you mind that, though. Self-protection is the first law of nature, and protecting yourself is what you are doing when by sending out good-looking stationery you create the impression that you are a man of success and good taste.

I hope the man who sent me the letter won't feel bad. I like him, but I don't like his old rubber stamp a bit.

AN OVER-ACTIVE RETAILER.

The art of doing things by proxy is an important accomplishment. Not once in a thousand times will your individual labor or mine elevate us to any marked extent in the financial world. In that world much depends on so manipulating the services of others that they may accrue to our benefit. The labor of man is an article of commerce. There are few people so philanthropic that they will pay me \$1 a day unless they expect to make a profit by the transaction. Before you would buy and sell lumber at the same price you would go fishing, to the almshouse, or somewhere else. I believe the proposition thus far is clear, but when we go farther and ask, "What profit should one man make on the labor of another?" we are brought up against

a question which will be settled only by the God of Justice. We will never settle it for the simple reason that we have no desire to do so. When I say we, I mean man collectively. Occasionally there is a rare exception to the rule, but as a whole we are grasping, selfish, and little care whether our neighbor's bread is buttered on either side if ours is buttered on both.

I had no intention of starting in so seriously, but I have a little boil on my ear this week and it drives me to heavy themes. I want to make a few remarks on the utter foolishness of any man in the lumber business, or out of it, trying to do everything himself. A few days ago I saw a yard man who apparently was carrying the whole business on his shoulders, and his shoulders were not very broad either. He was here, there and yonder. Excusing himself for a minute he rushed off to another part of the yard where his man was piling some new lumber, stepped around, looked at the pile on one side and then on the other, and then rushed back. When his son was talking lumber to a carpenter the father was trying to do two things at the same time, take in every word his son said and talk to me. Evidently he had no faith in the way his son and the foreman were doing their part of the work.

Now it is creditable to a man to be ambitious, industrious, but at the same time he should be sensibly so. I dislike to see an extremist even in that direction. There is no man who pleases me so well as does he who is self-contained. I enjoy chatting with a man from whose appearance you couldn't tell whether he was as lazy as a dog, or when at his business as lively as a flea. There are few things more unpleasant in a man than earmarks. When we are social let's be social. Take that man in question: If you were looking for somebody to fill a responsible position you wouldn't pick him out as the right one. He would work—there is no question about that—but at the same time he might flash in the pan. When you find a man

who never flashes in the pan—but then I don't know as you ever do find him.

This man is wearing himself out by inches. It doesn't pay. What if his foreman had not piled every board just as he would have piled it? What if his son had not talked to the prospective buyer of lumber precisely as he would have talked to him? Not infrequently I have seen men worry because their work was not being done exactly as they would have done it, when at the same time to the onlooker it was being well done. It doesn't pay for any one man to attempt to run too much of the world. I could name a dozen men who are suiciding as surely as though at this very minute they were slashing their necks with a razor from ear to ear. A cut throat would shock the friends more, and therein lies about the only difference.

There is a great packer whose name is a household word, one of the most gigantic of money-making machines. Maybe I have never told you that I was born neighbor to this man, I was. There sprang right from that little section the great packer, Secretary Gage, Eli Perkins, the Loomis horse thieves, and myself. The people who have gone out from that little territory are noted for their intelligence, enterprise, push—and horse stealing. But we will let that pass. As I was about to say, for years this great packer has carried as much of his immense business on his shoulders as he possibly could. He would be at his desk at seven in the morning, and pound, pound away like a mighty trip hammer. Today he is doctoring over in Europe. I will guarantee he has seen days and weeks at a stretch when he would have swapped several of his millions for a body that would give him as little worry as yours does this very minute. We are sometimes richer than Julius Caesar without knowing it. Have you an idea this packer would have permitted one of his fine carriage horses to be driven as he has driven himself? Of course he wouldn't. He would insist that any steer that was brought to his yards should be better treated.

If this yard man dances around like a chicken on a hot stove for ten years or so, what will it avail him? Nothing. If he has his senses when he is about to say good-bye to his old stamping ground he will call himself an ass for having encroached upon his rights as he did. I wish we would think of that phase of the question oftener than we do. It is a serious thing to wrong ourselves.



"Little arms stole 'round my neck."

I wish this boil on my ear would have its run so I could tackle a more cheerful subject. In my normal condition I don't care anything about your millionaires anyhow. They are no better than the rest of us. I do not regard the millionaire of any greater importance in the world than the man who today is sawing my wood.

I thought I had finished this subject, but as I whacked out the last line on the machine some little arms stole around my neck from behind and hugged until I begged to be let go.

"What is that for?"

"Because I love you."

"What do you love me for?"

"Because you love me."

"How much do you love me?"

"All of London full!"

Talk about the millionaires who have warped their souls to fit the shape of Mammon. God bless 'em! I hope they are as happy as I am, but I don't believe they are.

THE SCARCITY OF LATH.

The lath question is a burning one. I asked one of the ablest manufacturers in the northwest if he ever expected to see such a condition in the lath market as then ruled, and he said he never dreamed of it. We may draw a conclusion or two from this lath condition. You and I have heard talk without end about long-headed men; how they can look way down the dim vista and see what is going to be brought forth. There is a great deal of bosh about such talk. I will admit there are people who are pretty long-sighted, still I have never had the pleasure of the acquaintance of a man whose foresight was equal, by a whole row of apple trees, to his hind-sight. Not many months ago I sat in the office of one of the biggest manufacturers in the country. His operations are of a volume to stagger a common mortal. He really sits on a wooden throne, and he knows it, too. He is regarded as one of the shrewdest men in the business. But we are never so wise when we sit in front of the curtain as we are when we go behind it. I knew this man when he was no more of a lumberman than your wife is. As a means of self-protection he became owner of a little mill, and gradu-

ally built up the plant. It paid well, and he kept on. He did not at the start figure it out that the manufacture of lumber was going to be such a mighty big thing. He stumbled into it, and has been borne along with the tide.

There are a host of saw mill men and wholesale dealers in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan, and why was there not somebody among them who could correctly size up the



"Turned my old black cow into lath."

lath prospects? But there was not one—not even one in the whole crowd. For the amount of capital it would have been necessary to invest there has not to my knowledge been another such chance to make money out of a product of the saw mill. What if when lath was selling at say \$1.45 you had sold your lumber yard that some man was begging for every day and put the money into lath to be delivered when you said so? Today, without having raised a finger to move

the stock, you could be wearing diamonds. I wish I had turned my old black cow into lath.

I saw a yard man the other day who was selling lath for \$4.10. The question was put to him what on earth he was thinking about. It developed that he was one of those dealers who don't think their customers will pay the advance of the wholesale market. When a kid I served under one of the best merchants, in my opinion, that ever walked on two feet, and having been thoroughly drilled in the principles of trade I cannot understand the ways of a tradesman who takes the position that he should not follow the market, whether up or down. That, I believe is what the true merchant does, but it is not what many a man who is selling lumber at retail is doing.

A yard man was recently wondering why more patent lath is not used these days. I cannot tell except that builders don't want it. This season I have been around many buildings that were going up, and the number in which patent lath was being used can be counted on two fingers. I believe that the average carpenter talks down patent lath. An architect told me that if properly put on he preferred patent lath to the other—but you see that "if" comes in there. Very likely the use of patent lath goes by districts or neighborhoods, like the smallpox and measles.

ENCOURAGING TO BEGINNERS.

When a man is in a thoughtful mood it is impossible to tell in what spot he is going to break out. Judging from his previous remarks, I thought the yard man was going to tell how rapidly he had rolled up wealth and that phase of his career as a retail dealer did not interest me in the least. He was comfortably fixed, and that was enough. We all know that the selling of lumber at retail out here in the prairie states has been a good business. There are many who have made big money at it; many others who have done fairly well and made a good living; while comparatively few have

failed. In a hundred years I could not learn to love a man because of his riches. Unless to boot he is a good fellow, he may go to the dogs with his riches for all I care. But the good, rich fellow—that makes a pretty good combination.

An injustice was done this yard man, for instead of parading his bank account he went on and made a talk that may cheer the hearts of some dealers who are just starting in business. You know that when we start out in any undertaking that is new to us trouble seems to pile up. Petty annoyances appear like mountains. When experience has taught us to feel sure of our footing these little irregularities which worried us so much of old have no particular meaning. We regard them as "of course," and let them go their way.

"I came out here with my wife from the east," said this yard man, "with little money and no credit, and dropped into a lumber yard. I had come out of my father's yard, had never taken any responsibility, but thought I could hold my own. That is not the way to bring up boys—make them responsible from the day they are able to do anything. So long as I was with my father it did not enter my head that he was more than an average man, but before I had been away from him six months if he could have stepped in and given me a little advice it would have made me happy. I doubt if a boy appreciates his father until he becomes a father himself. I took the yard in June and trade was dull. Every night my wife would ask me how much I had sold that day. There were days when I didn't sell 50 cents' worth. Then I would catch my wife crying. I told her that was the way the lumber business went; but, to tell the truth, I had never seen it go that way before. We put in an uneasy summer and didn't eat beefsteak and mushrooms three times a day. Early in September, in less than an hour, I sold a church bill and as soon as I could get rid of the committee I rushed over to tell my wife. 'But does it pay anything?' said she. 'Two hundred dollars!' said I. That minute we were the richest couple in the state. Then other bills came

along. The farmers wanted to fix up for the winter, and I sold a lot of stuff and did well enough. We went into the winter with no pressing need and knowing where our grub, clothing and firewood were coming from. The chief trouble was I was new to the business out here. I thought I couldn't wait, though as events proved I had to wait. That is the way the lumber business goes. I see whole weeks now that I feel like going fishing, but after a little trade picks up again.



"Then I would catch my wife crying."

There is nothing surer than that people must keep right along building and repairing. If they don't do it this month they will next, and if not this year then the next. When there is a lull they are getting ready to come and see you again."

This little recital may not inspire you a particle, but it did me. It illustrates some excellent points—one, that if an earnest young man will attend to his knitting he will finally finish the stocking. It is generally those who do not attend to their knitting that fall among thieves and gamblers.

HANDY LITTLE BOOK.

It is not every man who has had the advantage of a business education. I suppose that the great majority of

the most successful lumbermen have not had it—that is, a technical education. They have never attended commercial college and learned the various forms of bookkeeping and the proper way to write out this and that form. It need not be said that a knowledge of these things has ever made a successful business man. It may materially aid him; but the quality which makes the successful business man is inborn and could not be learned in a commercial college in a thousand years. This technical knowledge is not the man; it simply assists the man.

A yard man took a little blank book from his desk drawer and handed it to me. I saw that entered against



"Profits on the cover."

each working day there was an amount. Then, turning the book in my hand, I saw "Profits" written on the cover.

"So these figures represent your profits?" I said to him.

"Yes," he replied. "I did not show them to you, thinking that the amounts would stagger you, but that possibly

they may suggest an idea to somebody else that may be of service to him. All I ever learned about figures was in a district school house and in a lumber yard. Double entry bookkeeping is as Greek to me as the Greek language itself. I worked for So-and-So in his yard for three years before I branched out for myself, and while he had an expert bookkeeper and all that it did not seem to me that the system filled the bill. Every once in a while Jim would set us taking an inventory of the stock to see whether he was making any money or not, as he expressed it. I concluded that there must be some better way than that, and the first day I opened my yard I started my little book and have kept it up. At night I know what I have sold, I know what it cost, and the difference represents the gross profit of the day. Deduct from that amount my expenses, and I have it."

"With the exception," I broke in, "that some of your bills receivable may fail to be received."

"Yes, that is so," said he. "But I can tell you that my bills receivable which are not received are light. I had so little money when I started and had worked so hard for it that it seemed precious to me. I was going to take no chances of losing it and that determination has stayed by me up to the present hour. I have no money to lend to people whose disposition or ability to return it to me is doubtful; then why should I trust to those people my lumber which cost me money?"

I arose and slapped the man on the shoulder. "That," said I, "is the clear stuff! If every yard man in America would use that as a text, print it in golden letters and paste it in his hat so that his brains would fully absorb it, it would be worth millions to the trade."

When fishing we know what we will catch. When the train pulled into this little burg I was in doubt whether it would be the thing to get off or not. But you see what was found: A yard man who owned right up to his knowledge of bookkeeping was exceedingly limited, but who had adopted a system, in part, which he hoped might

benefit some one else; and in addition to this a man who got off as wise a saying as could any lumberman in the whole country, no matter if he should use a club on his head from now till next week pounding it out.

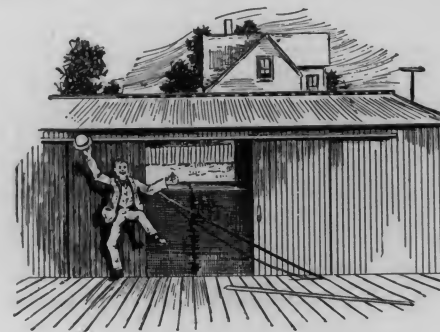
A CONTRACTOR'S DILEMMA.

There are free lances in the market who know their customers and treat them accordingly. If they are shipping lumber to a contractor who is known by them to be posted on grades, who will kick like a mule if he does not get what he buys and furthermore is a man whom they hope to retain as a customer, they may send him a fair quality of lumber, but if the stock is shipped to a 2x4 carpenter who fiddles around here and there without knowing what he does want, or to a farmer to whom a board is a board, then only the Lord knows what grade of material he will get. The way certain of these poachers adjust their grades to the supposed ignorance of their customers has become a fine art.

When writing this I have in mind a contractor who knows lumber as well as the best of us, and it is part of his business religion to buy where he can buy cheapest—a principle which few good business men repudiate, and a plank in the business platform of the most successful operators in every line. In my range of lumber acquaintances I can recall only one dealer who does not follow this plan. This man never runs after strange gods. When he buys it is more of a principle of whom he buys than it is to get the lowest possible price. If I am not mistaken he refuses to insure his yard in a mutual company on the ground that he regards it as his duty to patronize the insurance agents of his own town. Such men are as scarce as hens' teeth, however.

In this matter of cheap buying we are liable to get it soaked to us unless we know precisely what we are going to get. Price is one thing and quality another. There are thousands of branded articles in the market, and no matter

whether we pay a cent or a hundred for one of them there would be no difference in the quality. But we know how lumber can be manipulated, for some of us have manipulated it. So far as the grades are concerned well meaning men differ. For instance, look at the work of the bureau of inspection of the white pine manufacturers' association. That bureau has done its best to adjust grades as to different localities. It has employed as able men as could be had, yet this grading has not been brought down to a nicety. There are yard men who buy at certain manufacturing points, believing that the grades there obtained are superior to those to be had at certain other points. The question of opinion,



"Fairly danced with joy."

judgment, comes in here. In one section the timber has more knots, in another more shake, and it is the aim of the inspection bureau to make the same grades in the different localities of the same value. You can readily understand what part judgment plays here. Suppose here are two suits of clothes, one suit has rips in one part of it and the other rips in another part. In one suit there are holes in some places and in the other holes in different places. It is very doubtful if we would agree as to the relative values of the suits. This illustrates the estimation in which the work of

the inspection bureau is held by its own members and by the retail dealers. The inspectors use their best judgment in establishing the grades, but their judgment is neither yours nor mine. The bureau may say that a board cut from an upper Mississippi log containing knots is equal in value to one cut from a Wisconsin valley log containing shake, and while the bureau may settle that point for itself it cannot settle it for you. That board is more valuable for you which sells the more readily; to which the fewer objections are raised by your customers.

I would not want to buy lumber, and pay in advance for it, of a dishonest man who lived so far away that it would cost all that the car of lumber was worth to make the trip and lick him. Your carpenter, your farmer has paid for his lumber, receives poor stuff, and what is he going to do about it? Swallow the whole thing and take an oath that he will never be caught like that again until the next time. That is all he can do. I should like to see the carpenter or farmer bring suit against one of these poachers for damage owing to not getting value received for his money! Why, that carpenter or farmer would be made a monkey of so quick he would not know himself. This contractor who forms a subject for this little piece is up to several kinds of snuff, and he knew very well that the cheapest thing for him to do was to swallow the deal.

The contractor in question has been mighty close with the yard men of whom he has bought lumber, demanding good material and low prices, and getting them, but you know that at times we have worms or microbes or other similar animals which prey upon us and temporarily, at least, change our natures. It is no doubt a mistake to think that microbes affect only what we call our physical organizations. I believe there are microbes which prey upon our mentality as well. In fact, when we come right down to business and let speculation alone, I guess the man has not yet been born who was smart enough to separate the mental from the physical. Prior to a close study being made of these things it

was easily done—just as our ignorance permits us so easily to settle many other great problems about which we really know little—but the last analysis that has been made says that every thought that emanates from your brain or mine is composed of matter, fine, subtle matter, but matter just the same, and if that be so why should there not be more subtle microbes than those which gnaw away on our livers and lungs?

This contractor has a job and failed to make a dicker to suit him with the local yard man. Probably the contractor demanded too much and the yard man wanted too much. Let me say this in favor of this contractor: He always gives the yard men in the towns in which he may be building the first chance. I tell you if personally I were the retail lum-



"Nail it right to the boards."

bermen of the United States these poachers would go out of business, for I would keep them out of my territory if now and then I had to give away a bill to do it. When a yard man gets to thinking that he is the whole thing and pitches his prices unreasonably high, he lays himself wide open to the ravages of the poacher. As the contractor and retail man could not agree on prices the lumber for the house was shipped in. The contractor opened the car and fairly danced with joy. He pulled out a few boards and they were fine. Then he took the train and went off to another town to oversee a job for a day or two, and when he came back his man had the car unloaded.

"Where did that blank C siding come from?" roared the contractor.

"Why, out of the car, of course," meekly replied the supe.

"And these blank four boards?" again roared the contractor.

"Out of the car," meekly answered the supe.

The 4-inch C siding was 90 percent blue sap and the No. 4 boards were so wretchedly poor that the man who was building the house would not permit them to be used. I know this contractor and I can imagine how he jerked up his pant legs, spit tobacco juice and tore around like a baby cyclone. I don't know whether he is cured or not, but the chances are he is if the yard men in the towns in which he has contracts will only meet him half way. At any rate he is so much in love with the poacher of whom he bought the bill of lumber that he asked permission of a yard man to leave a bundle of this blue sap siding in his yard, and brand it to the effect that it came from such and such a poacher.

"And I will make my affidavit and nail it right to the boards if you say so," he remarked.

KEEPING COMFORTABLE.

Now that the frost is on the pumpkin it is plainly the duty of the yard man to get up the stove in his office. There are retail lumbermen who will stand around thumping their hands and feet to keep them warm when they ought to have a glowing fire in the office stove. I am not speaking for myself, yet when I come to your office I want to be comfortable. Occasionally there is a yard man who is a regular buffalo to stand the cold. I expect he was born up in Norway or Sweden and is always sighing for a cold breeze. He will spit the ice from between his teeth and appear as happy as a clam in high tide. Then when we scribblers go around with our elegant fur coats on, with collars turned up, shivering like a cornstalk in a prairie breeze, these born refrigera-

tors look at us as though we were babes right out of hot air incubators.

Late last fall, when making a trip in southern Minnesota, when the morning was as cold as an unsatisfied creditor, I called on one of these ice men who happened to be up town on business. I froze for fifteen minutes, then went up the street to the place of another dealer, and the fact is we went out and got a cocktail to warm us up. At the Minneapolis convention I saw this man who lives without artificial heat,

and he gently chided me.

"I saw you were in my town, but you didn't come and see me," he said.

"Yes, I did," he replied. "I was there on such and such a morning, and your office was so much of an icebox that I didn't stay until



"Putting up the stovepipe."

you came back from town."

Then he asked me why I didn't chuck in a bundle of lath or a bunch of shingles and make a fire to suit myself. "By George!" said he, "tell me when you are coming the next time, and I will set the old office on fire!"

That was a sociable way to talk, but I knew all the time he was thinking I was a tender skinned kid.

This personal experience is simply thrown in. It does seem to me, however, that it is business to keep an office warm in cold weather. You wouldn't catch hardware, dry goods or boot and shoe men running their places the live-long day without heat when it was so cold they would have to walk around the premises to keep warm. Their business education was not neglected to that extent. If they were born in Greenland, when in Rome they do as the Romans do. If in the matter of keeping our offices warm we are

competing with blacksmith shops and saw mills let us own right up to it.

There is the fall duty of putting up the stovepipe, pinching our fingers, falling off chairs, saying bad words etc., which comes to so many of us, and we may as well indulge in the pleasure before the last housefly disappears as to wait until the snow comes swirling in at the door. We know it must be done, so why not buckle to and get the nightmare off our minds?

Many yard men do not take down their stoves the year round, and there they stand in the middle of the floor, eter-



"Will set the old office on fire."

nally ready for business. These men have never, of course, taken lessons in house keeping from their wives, but that doesn't matter. If we can't have a few liberties of our own we will rebel and cut the apron strings right in two.

PRAIRIE FENCES.

I wish we could evolve beyond the barbarity of the barbed wire fence, for, as highly civilized as we call ourselves, barbarous in regard to the use of this fence we certainly are. I should like to see the sum total of the loss of horses and cattle due to barbed wire. It would astonish

the world. Throughout the prairie states there is a countless number of horses from each of which dollars have been knocked by contact with barbed wire. I have seen the cussedness wrought by this style of fence until my heart has ached for the poor brutes. Not long ago I cut the wire of a fence in order to release a heifer that was astride of it, and whose flesh was torn and pierced in a way that was sickening to behold. The other day I saw a fine yearling colt with the flesh literally stripped from the inside of its hind legs to the bone. These sights are common, and all



"The barbarity of the barbed wire fence."

over the country, on fence and tree, is posted the announcement that some patent medicine man's liniment is just the thing for wire cuts.

It would be a task to determine what the human race will not do for the almighty dollar. I was well acquainted with the patent lawyer through whom an inventor sought to secure a patent on one of the first, if not the first, barbed wire fence device, and the lawyer turned it down on the ground that the applicant would be spending his money for nothing, as he did not believe that the public would countenance such an implement of cruelty. The

lawyer, however, was wrong. His heart was too tender; and I have thought what a noble tribute to his worth it would be if on the monument over his grave were the simple inscription, "To the memory of the lawyer who refused to assist in securing a patent on barbed wire for fencing."

The introduction of the wire fence dampened the ardor of many a pioneer retail lumberman. These lumbermen came on from the east where rails, boards and stone were used for fencing; hence they thought that "out west" they would have a cinch on the fence industry, for they couldn't pick up a stone big enough to throw at fighting cats, and there was no timber from which to split rails. They thought as fast as the prairie was laid off into farms they would sell the fencing to inclose them; but, as the Scottish bard says, "The best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft aglee." In one sense it was perhaps as well that this scheme did not carry, for where would the stuff have come from to fence all these prairie state farms with boards? It would have rushed the supply of lumber, there would have been more of a shortage up north than there is today, the barons would have sent prices up higher than a pine tree, and emigrants would have been so discouraged that they would have waded right through the sea of prairie grass and brought up maybe beyond the Rockies. Then where would you and I have been? When we reflect how things might have been we should feel thankful that they are as they are. There are so many holes in the logic of the above statement that you might say a full-blooded Irishman wrote it, but when a fellow gets his head hard set in any particular direction he doesn't care a rap for logic if he can only get there. We can prove this to our satisfaction in a minute by glancing at politics, religion, literature or art. I have concluded that when a man says that logic shall not stand in his way he is no more of a fool than are ninety-nine one-hundredths of his fellow creatures.

As it has turned out, the term fencing as applied to a

grade of lumber in the middle west is a misnomer. We will it fencing, but use it for a hundred and more purposes.

It would do me good to see the barbed wire fence go, however. Had I not a little stretch of it myself I might say that it is a disgrace to any man who will make use of it. A few weeks ago I listened to a woman who came near putting me to sleep with a sing-song woman suffrage address, and I thought, "Old gal, if you would quit discussing these questions which are problematical anyhow, and take up the cause of the dumb brutes vs. the barbed wire fences, I would throw a half dollar instead of a bogus nickel into the hat for you."

LOW PRICES THEIR SALVATION.

I met a yard man whose burden of complaint was that lumber is not admitted free into the United States from



"A tariff discussion on a street corner."

Canada. He thought if lumber were so admitted it would sell cheaper at wholesale, and one might conclude from what he said that life would be sweeter and that the fine farm he owns would measure more to the acre.

There is not much pleasure wrestling in a tariff discus-

sion unless there is more of an object than for a fellow to hear himself talk. There are some things which are self-evident and others which can be reasoned out with some degree of human certainty, but I never attempted a tariff discussion on a street corner when I thought I came out whole, and doubtless the other fellow had the same humiliating feeling. It amounts to talk, talk, talk, statements on both sides which cannot be proved, charges and cross charges, and in the end nothing gained. I have talked tariff in print a great many times, but that is another thing. A printing press will whirl off your great thoughts, then you can go home and sleep in peace, and if the people who read your articles do you up you don't know a thing about it. I have an idea there are as many as one or two newspaper men who think they weigh a ton simply because they are not obliged to come in contact with men who know more than they do. I have been there myself.

Last summer I heard a protestant and a catholic discuss the question of religion, or rather the one of churches. They started in by knowing it all, said a hundred things they didn't know, and ended no nearer together than when they trained their guns. The fact was neither of them wanted to be convinced and each thought that the other was as blind as a new kitten, and a further fact was that neither of them was half as wise as he thought he was. If we could be at the same time the man on the ground and the man up the tree it would be a splendid way to become acquainted with ourselves.

For the reasons set forth I don't want to talk tariff in private. I have my opinion on the subject, am perfectly willing that others shall have theirs whether they agree with mine or not, but I don't want to put in good time when it will not bring me a cent, nobody else a cent, and nobody be convinced. On this account while this yard man was laying down the law and gospel of the tariff business—obtained, I know, from a party organ—I made so little sign of life that he may have thought I didn't know a tariff from

the side of a barn. I don't care if he thought I was dead. An easy way, and sometimes the only way, to shut up other people is to shut up yourself.

But when it comes to the price of lumber at wholesale—there is a subject that is in sight, legitimate and always pat. And I can't understand—I say it right out, I can't understand—why there are men selling lumber at retail who are eager that the price at wholesale shall be low irrespective of the effect it may have on the wholesale dealers. Personally I want to see the whole shooting match, from the man who owns the tree to the one who peddles out boards to builders, prosper. Yet the cry of certain retail men is "Low prices! Low prices!" They appear to focus their whole natures on what should be low prices.

I recently saw a man who had sold his yard and was looking for a town in which to re-establish. "I don't know as it is just the time to put in a large stock of lumber," he said. That is a proper question to consider. There is many a dealer who would think seriously before laying in a stock from the foundations when prices seemed unreasonably high. Just how long present prices will hold none of us knows. A northern manufacturer said to me in a letter last week that by and by prices will tumble. It wouldn't do to tell his name, else his neighbors might hang him. There are certain conditions governing stocks and demand, however, which make it tolerably certain that low priced lumber will not knock at our doors immediately, but if any man pretends to tell you at what prices boards and dimension will sell following a change in these conditions, you can adopt Horace Greeley's method of addressing those who did not agree with him and call him a liar and a horse thief; that is, always first provided that you can lick him.

One of these low-priced yard men told me the other morning that these high prices had retarded building. No doubt in a limited number of cases that is so. Still it is not my observation that any more building has been postponed this season than there was last, or the one before last. We

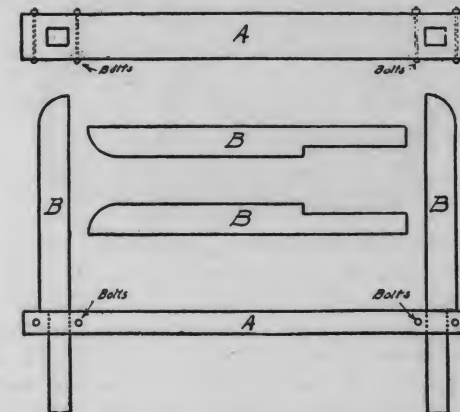
have never seen a season when plans for building were not made which did not materialize. There are people who are everlastingly building, in their minds. I know a man who has built a house every season for four years, and the foundation is not in yet. There may be numerous reasons why any man should postpone building. First and last I see a great many builders and contractors, and several of them have told me that in the majority of cases of the postponing of building plans the cause was the inability to get mechanics to do the work. That, surely, is a healthy condition of things, isn't it? In this connection I speak, of course, of frame buildings. On account of the great advance in structural steel store and office building plans have been tabled. When the increase in the cost of building is 75 per cent, as is the case with steel work, it is something to talk about. The difference between \$100,000 and \$175,000 is enough to stagger any but old Money Bags himself, but when to build an average house in wood the increase, as compared with a low priced period, is only a few hundred dollars the feeling of confidence which possesses so many these days is apt to overbalance it. Maybe my eyes are eclipsed, but that is the way I look at it.

What we want are equitable prices, whether they may be such that we may call them high or low. There is no more sense in thinking that prices of lumber should remain the same year after year than there would be in thinking that wool, cotton, quinine, iron should be stationary in price. Supply and demand—that is what does it, unless some miserable trust is back of a product. Let us be thankful there is no lumber trust. Both north and south there are associations, price list committees and kindred trade helps, but don't think for a minute that one of them would have a feather's weight if the demand should so fall off that the supply would exceed it. We may live to see the time when the price of lumber, especially in the northwest, will be pitched by one or two of the old long heads, but it will

not be until the whistle of many a mill that is slashing away today shall have tooted for the last time. Supply and demand will rule.

A LUMBER JACK.

This jack is the invention of Senator Lathrop, of Northfield, Minn. A is an oak stick, 3x4, and BB are other oak sticks an inch thick and about four inches wide. Between the mortises in A the distance is 39 inches—one inch more than the distance from one wagon stake to the other. The



stakes can be made any length, preferably about four feet. On each side of the mortises bolts should be put through the crosspiece to prevent it from splitting.

When it is desired to put on a big load of lumber, having piled it to the top of the wagon stakes, one jack is placed near the forward stakes and the other near the hind ones, the jacks acting as extended stakes. In large part these jacks take the place of a binder.

Suppose a farmer customer is in town who, in addition to flour, sugar, salt etc., wants to carry home a thousand

feet of lumber; he comes with a lumber wagon and in the bottom of the wagon are the articles he has bought at the grocery. A couple of these jacks are placed across the box and the lumber is piled on. When unloading, the stakes may be pulled over until the lumber rests on the edge of the cross piece, when the boards may be drawn from the side of the wagon instead of directly back.

"I used these jacks two years before I learned how to carry them on an unloaded wagon, without a box," said Mr. Lathrop. Then he took them, stuck one end down into the hounds of the wagon, with the other end resting on the bolster, and there they were as securely as though they were locked.

It costs only a small amount to make these jacks and there are those who call them a big thing. All the yards in Northfield have adopted them and do not think they could keep house without them.

THE WINNING TWAIN.

We had picked up pieces of lath on the way, looked around the yard, took reserved seats on a pile of lumber, and naturally both fell to whittling. This dealer is known as a close buyer and I have heard traveling salesmen censure him because he wants his money's worth. He is regarded as one of the best merchants of the town, and out there on the lumber pile I thought I should like to tap him and permit some of his lumber lore to flow over these pages. Every time a successful man tells how he got on in the world it ought to benefit us, whether it does or not.

"I started out by determining to make a part of my profit on the buying end of the business," he remarked. "When a man buys right, if pushed to it he can sell as low as his neighbor, and if not pushed to low prices my profits exceed those of the dealer who does not buy close. It isn't the salesman or the wholesale dealer I am trying particularly to please; it is my customer. A customer knows

mightily well whether his interests are protected or not. We sometimes make a big mistake by ascribing to others less intelligence than we ourselves possess. Others are as sharp as we are. A man wants what he buys, and he wants it as cheap as he can get it elsewhere, and if it is a little cheaper he never grumbles. If I have ever had many dissatisfied customers I don't know it. When I sell a bill of lumber



"Both fell to whittling."

I want to show the stuff to the buyer, tell him what it is, and if it has defects point them out to him. Today I sold cedar shingles for a house. The old man who is building the house liked the looks of them and remarked that they appeared to be a perfect shingle. I told him that in every sense they were not perfect; that they would stain his cistern water red; but as he uses city water that was no objection. Confidence in you, and fair prices by you, will sell more goods than any other agency. It's what will keep your business going year after year."

I thought he was getting along admirably, but evidently he did not want my visit to be a monotonous one, so he changed the subject and, evidently being a silver man, he had something to say about the old 16 to 1 question. I

had heard that question discussed and cussed so much that it has no charms for me, and as life is short I shut up my jackknife, slid off the pile of boards and told the yard man I would run over and see his neighbor.

THE RELIGION OF DIFFERENCE.

After a yard man had passed the time of day he said he did not agree with a certain conclusion I had reached, and was half inclined to write me. I asked him why he did not, and his reply was he did not know that I would like it!

He would never be able to arouse any lion in my nature



"See things in a different light."

by disagreeing with me. Why, even my best girl and I not infrequently see things in a different light. It may be on some literary, social or religious point; and for that reason have you an idea that we go to pulling hair? Not to the extent that I am yet bald. We talk it over and then go right along thinking our own thoughts as though nothing

had happened. It is an unwritten law in this household that there is no coercion of thought. Whether my children shall grow up thinking as the old man does concerning the problems of life is a matter of no concern to me. I tell you the old man can crack few enough of them to his satisfaction, and that being the case it would be folly for him to instruct others just how to do it. I impose one requirement—that my children think honestly. I want to give them all the opportunities in my power—schools, books, churches, music, lectures, anything that will inspire them to think vigorously and purely—and then leave them as free as the clouds in the air. What would you think of me if I should bring down a pair of my pants some morning and insist that my boy wear them? He would say they did not fit—the legs were too long, the waist too large. Then I would shout, "They have got to fit! What is the matter with your legs and waist?" Then if he couldn't expand his stomach and extend his legs to the exact proportion of mine I would denounce him. You would call me a bloomin' idiot, wouldn't you? Well, I should call myself just as much of an idiot should I attempt to make my boy's mentality tally with mine. I could make a seeming conformity by forcing him to be a hypocrite, but I have an idea that will not leave me that if we draw near to our Master it must be because we are honest men.

A LABOR SAVING DEVICE.

We lumbermen who have so many times gone to bed with tired legs and aching backs have longed for easier ways of doing our work. We do not take any too much comfort if we use all the conveniences possible in our occupations. I am a thorough believer in labor savers. That man is not entirely sane who does not want as easy a time as is consistent with the successful prosecution of his business. In Missouri I saw a yard man who was piling some timbers, and he went at it as if there was not such a thing as ingenu-

ity or inventive genius in the world. After he had gotten through lifting the timbers, one on top of the other, he sat down on a pile of lumber to talk for a few minutes, and if he was not a played out individual you never saw one. The perspiration streamed down his face and he was so exhausted that he panted like a race horse. That is no way to treat ourselves. We are a finer piece of machinery than that expensive watch of yours, and worth more than a thousand watches. And no doubt you are so careful of your watch that you will not open it to let your little boy see the wheels, afraid that a particle of dust may get into the works. By and by this man will get stiff with rheumatism, be or-

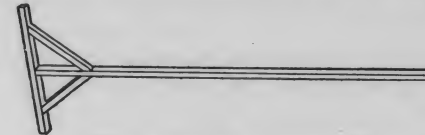


"Sometimes you crawl over them."

dered off to some mineral spring and spend a hundred times more money than it would have cost him to hire a man to share the lifting with him.

The little device referred to above is nearly the shape of many a window cleaner you have seen. Put whiskers on it and it would be a brush with which windows could be washed. It is composed of a handle, a head piece and two braces. My artistic genius makes it look on paper like the accompanying cut. You are mechanic enough to make one of them in ten minutes. Maybe you cannot guess what you could do with such a thing in your shed. It will save you wearing your shoe taps off and humping your back when you are piling lumber. You have undoubtedly reached the conclusion that much of the lumber that is piled in your

shed ought to be stuck. There is safety in this sticking, notwithstanding the boards may be fairly dry. Ordinarily when you are piling you go over to the other end of the pile—sometimes have to crawl over there—to place the lath. With this simple little implement you are not obliged to do



"This simple little implement."

this. You need not go away from the front end of the pile at all. You shove on the board, lift it up, put your stick on the board under it, and with this little apparatus shove the stick back just where you want it. Try it once and you will think it does not lack much of taking the place of a man.

YARD MAN'S OPINION OF BULL METHODS.

I had not long to stay in the town, and the yard man said he would go to the hotel and eat dinner with me so we could put in all the time together possible. We sat down at an old fashioned meal. At that house they know nothing about course dinners. Everything was in one course, and we passed the dishes from one to the other as we who were so fortunate as to have been there used to do on the farm. On the center of the table was a caster, with about half a dozen bottles in it, and when we didn't see the condiment we wanted we would give it a whirl so that the pepper, or vinegar, or mustard, would come around our way. You remember this piece of table furniture, don't you? Our wives used to think they could not hold up their heads in society unless they had one of them. Of course they were pewter, with a little silver washed over them, but they were big and showy—and that was the point! The girl at this hotel who waited on table was actually too unsophisticated to

flirt. A young drummer tried to be a little cute with her, and she looked at him as innocently as though she were a Jersey calf. Nevertheless it was a good meal, well cooked and plenty of it. When we come right down to bottom facts there are a thousand frills in life which are only skin deep. The landlady came out and asked us if we would have another piece of pie. The yard man introduced her to me, and she sat down by the table, and before we had done chatting she asked me how many children I had. The way we get along in the world largely depends on the kind of company



"We would give it a whirl."

we keep. Had I not been with this yard man the landlady no doubt would have passed me by as she did the young drummer who was eating at the same table. She said nothing to him about his children.

When we went out on the steps and the yard man had whittled a match for a toothpick, he said he meant never to give serious attention again to a bull argument. "The manufacturers ramfuzzle us at every turn," he remarked. "Last fall and early winter it came from high authority up in Minneapolis that the supply of white pine would be 1,000,000 feet short in Minnesota and Wisconsin, and the

annual figures showed no such thing. A few weeks ago when I read the resolutions, or whatever they were, promulgated by the members of the manufacturers' association I laughed heartily. To me it looked like boy's play. If I had been a manufacturer I never would put my name to such a document as that. As I look at it, it was an indication of weakness. Last season, when elevator and railroad building were taking lumber in such quantities, they were at no pains to tell us that lumber was high, were they? Or why it should be high, were they? When a commodity is on a good solid basis there is no reason why it should be explained in concert. Why, in October, I was in Minneapolis, and they were as independent as telegraph poles. I could take the lumber or leave it alone. At that time they didn't waste a minute to explain to me why the lumber should be high.

"The southern mill men, too, got up on the roof. There was no prospect that yellow pine would go lower! Oh, no! They said it had got there to stay, this time. It was going to sympathize with white pine, and white pine would never go into the basement, nor even down on the parlor floor again. I took stock in what they said about yellow pine, and as a result I have lumber in my yard that I could have bought for \$5 a thousand cheaper since. I was too confident; that was what was the matter with me."

"What do you think about future prices?" I asked.

"I think they will continue to bob up and down like a sinker, just as to my knowledge they have for the past dozen years. Say!" he suddenly exclaimed, pulling the old arm chair around more in front of me, "I will tell you the mistake we make in buying. We are afraid of high prices, and we are afraid of low prices. There is some reason why we should be afraid of high prices, but there is no reason on the face of the earth why low prices should scare us. When lumber is selling at low prices is when we should stock up. Lay in then for all there is in us! We may not expect to sell it all right away, but there is no better prop-

erty in the world than lumber when it is bought away down, for we know it won't stay there long."

A team drove up in front of the yard and the dealer said he would have to go over and see what was wanted. I settled my dinner a few minutes longer, tried to find out from the drummer who was taking his after-dinner pipe how the shoe market was, paid my bill and walked down to the station.

Lumber Sheds.

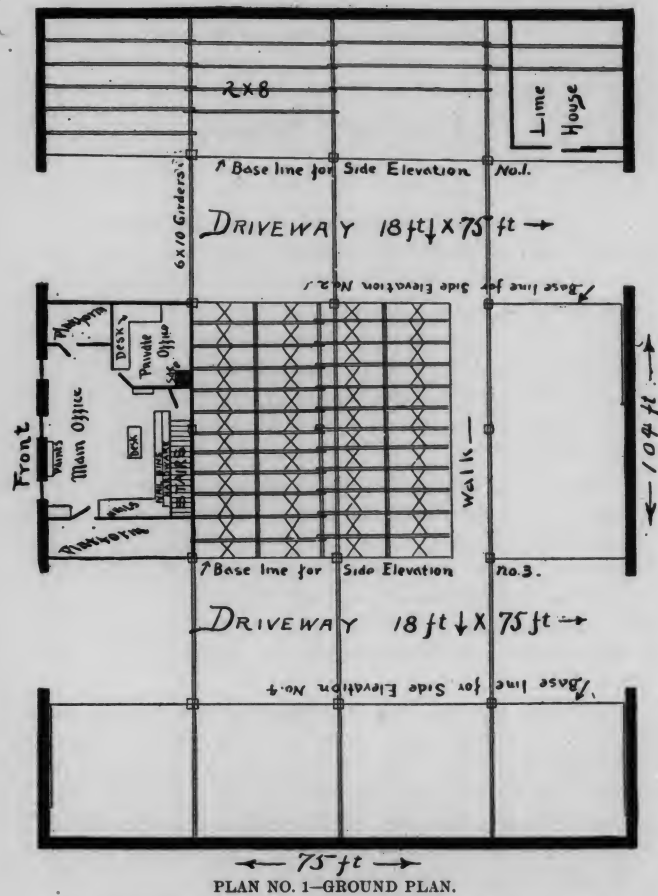
There is not space in this book to give any elaborate detailed plans of lumber sheds, but the subject is so important a one to retailers that the plans which follow may be of assistance to many. At any rate they will be suggestive. They show some improved ideas in shed arrangements, though in the AMERICAN LUMBERMAN have been published many others of different sizes and arrangements and adapted to different locations and, to a certain extent, to different classes of trade.

Plan No. 1 is of a shed designed to take care of every item in a country yard carrying a moderate stock. The ground plan gives a general idea of the arrangement of the interior, together with that of the office and its fixtures. The joists are laid and braced as shown in the center. The rafters are placed on girders as shown, the girders being 6x10 inches and supported throughout the entire building with 8x8 posts.

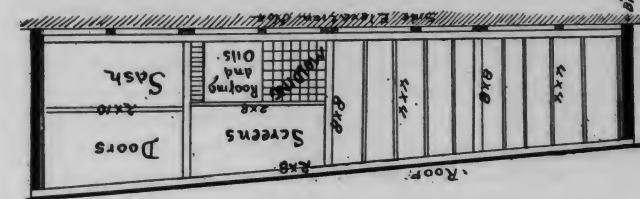
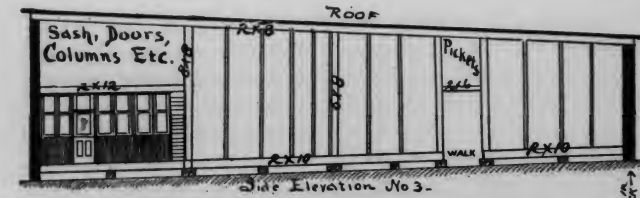
The cross sections show the arrangement of bins and partitions. The first two cross sections give opposite sides of the right hand alley looking from the front, showing on the office side the door into the office, and the windows, with room for sash, doors etc. over it; and on the other side 2-story spaces for doors and sash, back of it rooms for screens, roofing and oils and a molding rack.

The second two elevations show the opposite sides of the left hand alley or driveway.

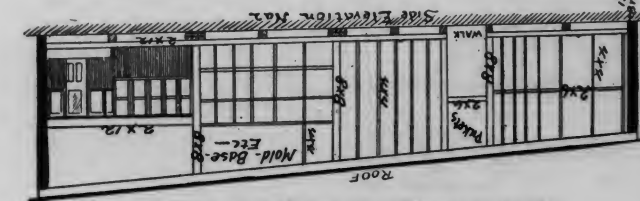
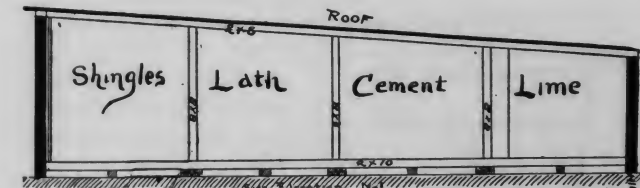
The shed is lighted from the four large doors at the driveways, the doors being each 14x15 feet. All the floor



joists are on an average of 6 inches from the ground. The uprights partitioning off the stalls are 4x4's. It might be said in this connection that lumber should not be piled on flooring joists but should have independent support from the ground.



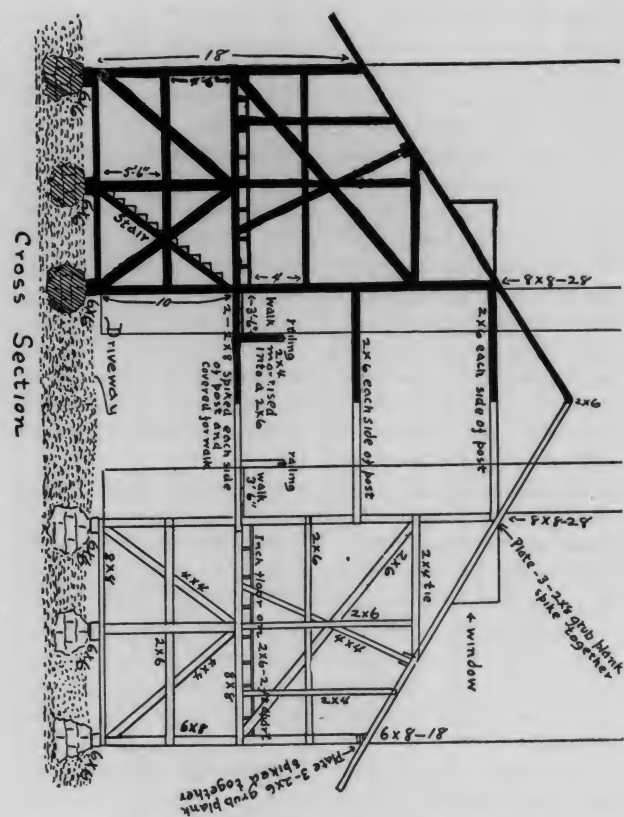
PLAN NO. 1—ELEVATIONS OF RIGHT HAND ALLEY.



PLAN NO. 1—ELEVATIONS OF LEFT HAND ALLEY.

A modern shed of a design popular in Illinois, also having two driveways, is designated as plan No. 2. Only a single view is given, but it presents a fairly good idea of the shed.

In size the shed is 90x112 feet, and 12 feet high at the



PLAN NO. 3—VERTICAL CROSS SECTION, SHOWING FRAMING.

rather, the top of the sash house, which is utilized for piling stock of various kinds. One portion of the space over sash house and at the front end is used as a molding rack. The rack is 24 feet long, containing 52 holes or pockets for molding.

This shed was designed and built by J. V. Price, of Casey, Ill., by whom it is in use with entire satisfaction.

The last plan is of a single driveway, 2-story shed. The particular shed from which this plan was taken is that owned by S. E. Sarles & Co., of Monticello, Iowa. The plan gives a cross section showing the framing. The length of this shed can be extended to suit the needs of any dealer. It is 48x80 feet in size and built of heavy timber. The sizes are all given on the plan except the depth of the lumber bins, which is 16 feet. The siding is of 4-inch fencing, beveled and nailed to 2x4 studs with a wide crack between each board, giving plenty of ventilation without leaving any large opening. The bins are of equal size, divided by the 8x8 uprights ten feet apart, with 4x6 uprights half way between. All heavy stock is piled below and light stock above. There are six windows to each side built out from the roof. The plates are three planks spiked together, and the whole shed rests on masonry piers and walls. It was built in 1893 and cost about \$800, complete.

INDEX.

A	PAGE.
Acceptance of lumber by unloading.....	291
Advantages of small towns.....	145
Advertising in retail trade.....	22
Agents and their authority.....	321
Agricultural implements and lumber trade.....	37
Amusements and business.....	212
Annoyances and how to meet them.....	60
Appearances and their trade value.....	43
Arbitration in trade disputes.....	114
Associations, retail	192
B	
Barbed wire fence.....	358
Bigness not an excellence.....	110
Bills should be rendered promptly.....	49
Bills should give details.....	216
Bills with delivery	47
Binding and loading	185
Binder of simple design.....	196
Binder for loads.....	196
Blind yards	287
Bolster for lumber wagons.....	195
Bookkeeping a protection.....	129
Bookkeeping essential	349
Bookkeeping, importance of it.....	130
Books of receipts.....	275
Bridge floors	305
Building hardware as side line.....	174
Buying right	168
Buying, time to buy.....	18
Buying yards, methods of.....	112
C	
Cancelling orders	320
Carelessness in bookkeeping.....	128
Carpenters and their peculiarities.....	318
Cash sales versus credit.....	74
Charity and the retail lumbermen.....	92
Character reading important.....	107
Charging when lumber is delivered.....	128
Checks on local bank an imposition.....	125
Coal as a side line.....	80
Coal house must be strong.....	87
Coal trade and its troubles.....	299

	PAGE.
Collection, difficulty of making them.....	203
Collecting from farmers.....	335
Collecting retail accounts.....	166
Comfortable offices.....	354
Commercial rating of customers.....	83
Competition between local dealers.....	179
Competition, different types.....	14
Competition in buying.....	56
Competition in prices.....	55
Contractors as customers.....	140
Contractors profitable friends.....	102
Contractors, their importance to the retailers.....	157
Conventions for retailers.....	203
Cost of selling lumber.....	209
Cramped quarters.....	276
Credit strengthened by discounting.....	47
Credit to customers.....	307
Cross sticking device.....	367
Cutting prices in local trade.....	21
D	
Daily statements.....	348
Deadbeats among customers.....	107
Delivery, free.....	293
Delivery wagons.....	293
Department store idea in lumber.....	110
Details in bills.....	216
Diplomacy in handling customers.....	39
Discounting bills.....	46
Displaying cottage doors.....	54
Disputes between wholesalers and retailers.....	221
Door exhibiting device.....	177
Door fastener.....	200
Doors, method of displaying.....	54
Doors of various sorts.....	320
Doors, plan for storing.....	142
Door rack.....	142
Doors, storm.....	330
Drain pipes, how to pile.....	269
Duplicate receipts.....	273
Dust and damage.....	277
Duty on lumber.....	361
E	
Eaves troughs for sheds.....	206
Eaves troughs on shed hoods.....	215
Employees, shortage of in yard and office.....	238
Expansion in retail business.....	150
F	
Fair prices trade winners.....	57
Farmers and their credit.....	335
Farmers as lumber dealers.....	138
Farmer customers and how to please them.....	24

	PAGE.
Farmers as capitalists.....	336
Farmer trade, how to get it.....	118
Farmer yards.....	138
Fashions in stock.....	271
Fences, barbed wire.....	357
Fencing, not used for fencing.....	359
Fighting between yards.....	179
Filling orders properly.....	134
Flooring, hardwood.....	246
Fourth of July.....	144
Fresh goods sell best.....	278
G	
Games in lumber offices.....	91
Gates for yards.....	313
Gifts to get trade.....	119
Glazed sash, care of.....	143
Good nature toward customers.....	39
Good stocks and good trade.....	229
Grade adapted to use.....	26
Grades and kicks.....	223
Grading customers as to responsibility.....	85
Grades in yard men.....	108
Gutters for sheds.....	206
H	
Hardware as a side line.....	77
Heavy timbers and how to handle them.....	72
Hemlock as yard stock.....	228
High grade retail stocks.....	38
Holding trade.....	254
Honesty a paying policy.....	279
House bill estimates.....	242
Hypnotic power.....	96
I	
Implements as a side line.....	35
Important trade.....	35
Insurance by parties not owners.....	292
Insurance on blind yards.....	291
Interest on farmer's accounts.....	335
K	
Kicks and how to make them.....	224
Knowing one's business.....	232
L	
Large towns and heavy expenses.....	66
Lath and their scarcity.....	343
Lath, patent.....	207
Lazy men in retail trade.....	197
Legal points.....	291
Lending lumber.....	92

	PAGE.
Letter writing.....	181
Lime house of novel design.....	220
Line yard men.....	187
Line yards and retail associations.....	198
Loading lumber.....	185
Loading in lumber offices.....	91
Local trade disputes.....	114
Location and competition.....	332
Location in town as trade getter.....	106
Location of yards.....	261
Lumber jack.....	363
Lumber returned from jobs.....	201
Lumber sheds, plans.....	373
Lumber tariff and business.....	360
M	
Managers of retail yards.....	205
Managers of yards.....	234
Maple and birch flooring.....	246
Millwork estimates.....	242
Moods in selling.....	190
N	
New towns and new yards.....	62
O	
Oak as bridge stuff.....	304
Offices, comfortable retail.....	52
One-man lumber yards.....	79
P	
Paint as side line.....	175
Partners should supplement each other.....	136
Patent lath.....	207
Patent lath.....	345
Patterns in house finish.....	272
Payment, prompt and otherwise.....	45
Pessimists.....	162
Plaster as side line.....	141
Picking over stock.....	259
Pile binder.....	237
Piling in lumber sheds.....	117
Piling lumber, an aid.....	211
Piling lumber easily.....	368
Pleasing customers.....	42
Pleasing the farmer customer.....	118
"Poachers" and how to keep them out.....	102
Politics in trade.....	58
Posts, the kind farmers want.....	133
Price advances, reasons for.....	218
Prices and cancelling orders.....	323
Prices at wholesale should be steady.....	81
Price lists above the market.....	268
Price lists as educators.....	265

	PAGE.
Prices too low at retail.....	302
Progress of twenty years.....	109

Q

Quarrels among local dealers.....	124
-----------------------------------	-----

R

Railroad extensions and new yards.....	62
Railroad track versus downtown yard.....	261
Rating books.....	308
Receipts for delivered lumber.....	295
Receipting for payments.....	274
Retail association, some objections.....	192
Retail yards, methods of buying.....	112
Returned material.....	201
Roller for handling heavy stock.....	72

S

Salesmen's authority repudiated.....	321
Salt to lay dust.....	324
Sash racks.....	143
Scant thickness of lumber.....	184
Screen door display.....	178
Schemes for getting orders.....	171
Screens, good and bad.....	226
Selling ability.....	96
Selling aided by good appearance.....	162
Selling by linear measure.....	148
Selling for cash.....	73
Selling lumber, cost of.....	209
Selling lumber from sample.....	105
Selling to the farmer.....	99
Selling what people want.....	152
Settlements with regular customers.....	76
Shed alleys and salt.....	325
Shed defects.....	27
Shed doors.....	315
Sheds as business getters.....	329
Sheds, closed versus open.....	32
Sheds, division of bins.....	117
Sheds for retail yards, plans for.....	373
Sheds for shingles.....	33
Sheds, length of.....	28
Sheds, open and closed.....	94
Sheds, ventilation of.....	29
Shingles, retail display of.....	231
Shingles, thick and thin.....	184
Side lines.....	174
Side lines.....	35
Side lines.....	77
Slovenliness in yard management.....	156
Small retail stocks.....	229
Small stocks means small business.....	290

	PAGE.
Small towns and light expenses.....	64
Statements and bills.....	166
Stationery of a retail business.....	338
Steady prices wanted.....	81
Stock rooms in retail business.....	159
Storm doors.....	330
Substitution in filling orders.....	127
Sycamore as a finishing wood.....	246

T

Tab on yard hands.....	186
Tact in handling customers.....	281
Thanksgiving Day reflections.....	255
Thickness of lumber.....	183
Thinking is hard work.....	59
Tricks of wholesalers.....	126

U

Use of lumber, knowledge of.....	25
----------------------------------	----

W

Wagons, device for high load.....	363
Wagons, light versus heavy for delivery.....	294
Wagon stakes.....	250
Wholesaler's complaint of retailers.....	124
Window screens.....	225
Windows, profits in glazing.....	170
Winter in small towns.....	88
Women as customers.....	297
Worrying is foolish.....	329

Y

Yard as real estate investment.....	262
Yard location in town.....	332
Yard managers.....	234
Yards, are there too many?.....	121

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